RALPH REYBRIDGE.

VOL. III.

THE

ADVENTURES

OF

RALPH REYBRIDGE:

CONTAINING

SKETCHES

OF

MODERN CHARACTERS, MANNERS, AND EDUCATION.

BY

WILLIAM LINLEY, ESQ.

The ways of Heav'n are dark and intricate,
Puzzled with mazes and perplex'd with errors,
Our understanding traces them in vain,
Lost and bewilder'd in the fruitless search,
Nor sees with how much art the windings run,
Nor where the regular confusion ends. ADDISON.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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RALPH REYBRIDGE.

CHAP. I.

In which our Hero encounters a series of adventures, equally dangerous, surprising, and pleasing.

Among many other excellent precepts inculcated in our hero's mind by his venerable tutor, was that of learning to encourage, in all situations, however distressing, a disposition to be comforted, and always to look on the bright side of things. Thus, whilst he took a retrospective view of his numerous misfortunes, he had the consolation of reflecting that scarcely an accident had befallen him that had not contributed to

his stock of useful worldly experience, and that had not either corrected his passions, or fortified his mind against the severer visitations of sickness, disgrace, or poverty.

"The atrociousness of Gullum's conduct, though it had reduced him to the greatest extremities, he now endeavoured to forget in contemplating the disinterested generosity of the worthy Thomas Tappum, and pursued his journey, comforting himself with the reflection that, however galling were the distresses he had undergone, they had not been brought upon him by his own wilful misconduct. In the midst of these contemplations, he began to wonder that the Exeter coach had not overtaken him: but lest our readers should wonder too, it becomes necessary for us to make a digression.

It is the fate of all *absent* men, (by which phrase I would be understood to mean all those who hold too abstracted

an intercourse with their minds) to forget what they are doing with their bodies. This was the case with * Will Honeycomb, when he threw his watch into the Thames, and put the pebble in his pocket; and this was the case of our contemplative hero, who happening to come to a spot where two roads met, and seeing a direction post with "London" and "Poole" inscribed upon it, very deliberately took the road to *Poole!* The evening beginning to close in, Ralph was no longer in doubt of his having missed his way. Mortified, almost past endurance, at the vexatious circumstance, he conceived he had a right to vent reproaches on his own carelessness as much as he pleased, and they were accordingly vented very plentifully on the first mile-stone he came to—the rising of the moon, however, soon gave him a hint that his time would

* Vide Spectator.

be better employed by returning to Salisbury, and to his benefactor Tom Tappum. With this resolution, therefore, he arose; but, by the time he had walked a mile and a half, he found himself so fatigued and so thirsty, that he was glad to halt at a very decent public house, a little way out of the road, in order to take some refreshment. On entering, and desiring to be shown to a room, the landlord surveyed him with looks of curiosity and distrust: and then calling to two or three fellows that were drinking in the kitchen, (and who instantly obeyed the summons) pointed to Reybridge, and asked whether they were sure that *that* was not the lad they were in search of. "He!" cried one of the fellows holding a candle to Ralph's face—"Noa, noa, friend Buzzard—not quite so young in inikity neither—I ha known Teddy Tenterhook, myself, these ten years, and can venter to say a, had a beard afore this chicken were

batched." Reybridge, who had, on proper occasions, his due proportion of spirit, now stalked up to this discerning publican, and contracting his animated countenance into a frown of great severity, desired to know what he meant by this usage, and whether he took him for a highwayman? The sound of Ralph's voice, and the manner of his address, completely cowed honest Boniface. "I ask pardon, sir," replied he, "I perceive I be mistaken. But when gentlemen travels in these parts on foot, and so late of evenings they must abide by the consequences. Many as good looking a man as your honour have taken me in afore now, and we inn-keepers can't be too much on our guard, as a body may say." Our hero had been too recently duped himself by external appearances, not to feel the full force of this justification. "Well, friend," replied he, "I confess you have some reason on your side. However, I can assure you, that

your apprehensions about me are perfectly groundless; I have unfortunately missed the Exeter coach by wandering out of my way, and as I am too tired to return to Salisbury to night, if you can accommodate me with some supper and a bed, I shall be glad." Ralph then ordered his favourite dish, a roast fowl and egg sauce, and mine host, with many bows, retired.

Two countrymen now walked into the house, and began a conversation which attracted the whole of Reybridge's attention. Indeed it was impossible for him to avoid hearing every thing they said, as the tap-room was only separated by a thin wainscot from his own. "Dong it," says one, "but the little jade made as much a to do, as thof a gang of robbers had got hold on her. And sartain sure Sir Frederick was wounded civil and parlite. Warn't he, Jemmy?" "Eh, eh," replied Jemmy, "He be parlite enow to the pretty

girls, but as sour as a crab to every body else. Well, but Dick, I be told she be a lady of fashion, and if that be the case, what right had Sir Frederick to force her against her will? if she were one of our poor country wenches not worth sixpence, indeed, that would alter the case." "Oh!" replied Dick, "for the matter o'that, she'll come to I warrant. The baronet beant so easily flung out when the game's in view." Our youth had frequently perused, (with all that delight and admiration which the immortal work almost always excites,) the Adventures of Don Quixote; nor was he less conversant with those other works of wit and fancy, which so happily blend the "utile dulci," and warm the imagination. He was, besides, possessed of great natural courage, and would have spurned at the idea of his own personal safety in the cause of his religion, his country, or his fellow-creature in distress. No sooner,

therefore, did the conversation, as above, meet his ears, than, starting up, he entirely forgot his fatigue and hunger, and thought of nothing but how he should rescue the damsel from the hands of her ravisher. Possessed of this idea, he darted into the tap-room, and roundly demanded of the two fellows he had seen enter the house, if they served this Sir Frederick they had been talking about,—and who the lady was he had forced away?—The clods, who were servants to a neighbouring farmer, started at this sudden address, and apprehending that Ralph, by his appearance, might be some gentleman in pursuit of the fair one in question, were for marching off; prudently concluding, that, as the baronet was the landlord of the estate on which their master was a tenant, it would neither be for their own or his interest to be seen in the business. This movement, however, Reybridge would by no means allow, and peremp-

torily insisted upon knowing the particulars of the affair. This command being accompanied by a very bright half-crown, to be divided between them on their telling the truth, no further hesitation was made; and Dick, the fellow that had been first spokesman, began as follows:

"Why, Sir, the long and short of the matter is this here. As I and Jemmy was returning, as it might be, from B—— fair; just as we had got within sight of the lane that leads down to Coverley-lodge (for that's the name of Sir Frederick Lorimer's place) we seed a smartish carriage on the road, and two or three of the baronet's servants about it. So, says I to Jemmy, 'Jemmy what's in the wind, now, says I?' (for you must know, Sir, that the baronet is one of the most fashionablest gentlemen about town, and will run any rig after a pretty girl.) Well: Jemmy agreed wi' I, that a was running a rig; and, sure

enough, when we came near the carriage we seed Sir Frederick himself with a very pretty young lady—(very pretty, warn't she, Jemmy?) under his arm; but we seed she was crying very much, and 'twas as much as the baronet could do, to persuade her to go along wi'un. I be sure she must be a quality lady, for she had a fine blue riding habit on, trimmed all over with gould and silver, and her maid was wi' her, who did nothing but cry out and abuse Sir Frederick, saying, that her poor young lady would be ruinated; and, then seeing us, she begged, if we was Christians, that we would reske her dear lady from the villain! I be sure, when I heard her call Sir Frederick such a hard name, my hair stood all up an end; but he only laughed, and told his servants to treat her civilly; which, sure, was very humane and christian-like, as 'twas returning good for evil, which is what our parson do recommend us from the pul-

pit every Sunday. Well, Sir, and so, some how or 'tother, by hook or by crook, they were carried off to Coverley-lodge."—"And is this all you know of the matter?" asked Ralph.—"The whole truth, indeed, Sir," replied the fellow, "as I've a soul to be saved! Ask Jemmy, else."—"And you don't know who this lady is?" continued our hero.—"Nothing at all, Sir, I assure 'e," replied Dick, "only that she be a stranger in these parts."—Ralph, now summoning the landlord, offered him two guineas, if he would let him have a chaise, and a brace of pistols, or a sword! He then promised the country-men five shillings, in addition to the half crown, if they would conduct him to the end of the lane they had mentioned, and a guinea to boot if they would assist him in rescuing the lady. But Boniface was by no means prepared to comply with these terms, when he heard for what purpose the chaise

was wanted. His horses were all knocked up, and, as for pistols, he was a man of peace, and never suffered such dangerous weapons to come within his doors. The honest publican did not, however, recollect at the time he was speaking, that there happened to be a brace, together with a blunderbuss, over the very fire-place where he was standing. These, our adventurous hero, jumping upon a chair, instantly seized, and hastened with them to his own room. A confused noise was now heard on the outside of the house, which was immediately after filled by a set of jolly souls, who, from their mode of saluting the landlord, Reybridge conjectured to be sailors. In a moment it occurred to him, that these sons of the ocean would no more refuse to engage in the service of the fair, than in that of king George himself. Flushed, therefore, with the idea, he again made his appearance in the tap-room; but the greater part of

the company had retired to the kitchen. Only one, an elderly man, was standing with his face to the fire, who, on Ralph's approach, turning round, discovered the iron features of honest Joe Grappling. No sooner did the old tar behold our hero, than, dashing a quid from his mouth, he ran and hugged him in his arms with great affection, nor was Reybridge backward in returning the embrace. "Odd's heart, Sir," cried Joe, "I be main glad to see thee! May I never swing in a hammock again, if I baint!—But this is a queer place to find 'e in, too, Sir; no foul winds I hope? No taking aback, hey, Mr. Reybridge? If so be that be the case, d'ye see," (drawing a leathern bag from his pocket) "mayhap, there be enough in this purse."

Here Ralph interrupted his friend, by assuring him that he was under no pecuniary distress at present: "But," continued he, "answer me one question,

Grappling: Are you, and your companions at liberty, for a few hours, to assist me in a trifling service?"—" Free as a fleet of ships before the wind, Sir," replied Joe, " and was bound for the port of Lunnun; but we are now ready to stand on any other tack you do choose. You must know, your honour, that since I seed you at dock, I received intelligence, d'ye see, that an old aunt, (a sister of my mother's) had broached to at Poole, in her 80th year, and left my dear Sall and I £150, bless her old heart. And so, d'ye see, I've bin for some of the legacy, and the rest I shall get at Lunnun, if the wind continues fair, and old Crankum, the attorney, dos'nt fobb me off with his law jargon." —I am truly rejoiced at your good fortune, Joe," returned Reybridge: " but now, will you and your shipmates assist me to rescue a lady from the hands of a villain, that, for aught I know, is, at this moment, meditating her ruin, if he

has not already effected it?" At this intimation, Grappling instantly applying his fingers to his lips, made the house ring again with a whistle that would not have disgraced the far-famed instrument of the illustrious Tom Pipes himself. Four stout sailors immediately appeared, and then Ralph acquainted them with all the circumstances before mentioned, not forgetting the landlord's shuffling behaviour, at which the jolly tars expressed great indignation, and Grappling, stalking up to the abashed publican, (who had also attended to the summons of the whistle.) "And so, brother," said he, "I find that you have refused your assistance to this brave gentleman, to enable him, d'ye see, to give chase to a pirate! I do only wish I'd a bin alongside, that's all—I only wish I had. Many's the time, and oft, that I and my shipmates have put in here for fresh provisions, and a little grog, but we shall steer for

another harbour in future, and so you may keep a good look out a-head for fresh traders, if you like." Here our hero interposed, seeing honest Boniface a little down in the mouth on the occasion, (for Joe and his messmates had been valuable customers to him) and pleaded his cause so effectually, that Grappling promised to overlook what had passed, provided a post chaise, and a couple of saddle horses, were immediately got ready. This order, therefore, the landlord readily obeyed; the rather, as he was well acquainted with Joe's funds, and knew that the greater part would, in a very short time, be lodged in his own strong box. In a little time our adventurers were ready to depart, putting themselves under the command of our youthful hero. The postillion was perfectly well acquainted with the lane we have before mentioned, leading to Coverley-lodge. The chaise, accordingly, went first, in which was

Ralph, armed with a brace of pistols, and Joe, with his faithful bludgeon, which he swore he could do more execution with, should it be necessary, than all the blunderbusses in the Tower. By the side of the chaise, on the horses, rode two of Joe's comrades, and the other two had taken post behind it, armed with similar weapons of defence. Having proceeded about a mile, Grappling called to the postillion, (who, it was easy to perceive, had been fortifying his spirits for their perilous journey, with a glass extraordinary) to mind his helm, and keep a good look out a-head;—instructions that Clodpole understood about as well as his horses. The night had not been very favourable to their adventure in the beginning; but, by this time, the clouds were nearly all dispersed, and a friendly moon shone in full splendour. At length the postillion stopped at the lane which he said would guide them to Sir Frederick's house;

that they must go on till they came to a great green gate to the right, and this gate opened into a large avenue of trees, which led directly to the lodge.

A council of war was now called, when it was determined, that one of the party, (in case of accidents from a premature discovery of their designs) should go on first to reconnoitre the premises, and ascertain the strength of the enemy—a service that our hero, notwithstanding Joe's remonstrances, resolved to undertake himself. Having, therefore, carefully examined his pistols, and borrowed a bludgeon, he proceeded down the lane, the chaise moving slowly after. In less than ten minutes he was stopped by the green gate before mentioned, of which circumstance having given due information to Grappling and his party, by a signal previously agreed upon, he opened the same, and continued his walk along the avenue, till he came in full

view of a very elegant mansion, near the entrance of which, a lady, apparently young and beautiful, was sitting in company with a gentleman, and both in earnest conversation. The question with Reybridge, now, was, whether he should discover himself and demand the restoration of the fair one, or whether he should return to his companions. On a closer observation of the young lady, he, however, observed that she showed no signs, whatever, of uneasiness in the presence of her supposed persecutor; on the contrary, that she laughed at something he said, and at length retired with him in a very cordial manner, into the house. The conclusion Ralph drew from these appearances, was, that the lady had, at length, been prevailed upon to overcome her aversion; and that the happy Sir Frederick was bearing her off a fair conquest. He was almost persuaded this must be the case; as the lady seemed to answer exactly the

description given of her; and the gentleman could be no other than the master of the house, as the servants had been frequently summoned by him, and sent on different errands. A violent noise from the house, and a sudden ringing of bells prevented, however, all further consideration, and he was rushing forward, when the hoarse, and well known voice of Grappling assailed him from behind, and checked his progress. "Huzza! Sir!" cried he in a half whisper, "The prize is recovered! We ha got her safe in tow, but we must clap on all sail, for I doubt the pirate will else bear down on us with a heavier weight of metal than we thought for, and we may lose her again in spite of our oaken towels." Our hero was astonished at this intelligence; but, as no time was to be lost, he brandished his bludgeon, and followed Grappling as fast as he could by a short cut to the green gate. Here, however, they perceived a party of ser-

vants with their master at the head, and whom Ralph instantly recollected to be the same person he had seen in conversation with the lady.—Turning therefore to his companion, he hastily demanded if he were sure that the lady his comrades had rescued went away willingly with them!—Joe vowed that she did, and that she frequently exclaimed "Oh! save me from the wretch, good people, and you shall be well rewarded!"—Our two adventurers had now opened the gate, and were making towards the chaise, which was waiting at a little distance, when Reybridge received a violent blow on the side of his head which almost stunned him; but the compliment was returned with such interest by Grappling, that three of the party (one of whom appeared to be the master himself,) were now laid sprawling. The sailors who had been guarding the lady in the chaise, now thought it was high time to hasten to the scene of

action, which they did, brandishing their cudgels, and a most dreadful battle ensued. During the contentions several pistols were fired, but, happily, without effect. The moon being nearly down, the contesting parties could scarcely distinguish friends from foes, and the consequences might have proved very fatal to some of the combatants, had not our hero, perceiving the arch ravisher, ran up to him, and presenting a pistol to his breast, declared he would put him to death if he did not instantly desire his servants to desist, and return to the house. After some hesitation, and an ineffectual struggle to get from our hero's gripe, the other was obliged to comply with this requisition, and in consequence his myrmidons made the best of their way back to the lodge. Sir Frederick, now, (for it was the baronet himself) offered the conquerors whatever ransom they pleased for the young lady in the chaise, but the gene-

rous tars rejected his bribes with disdain, and Grappling, advising our hero not to let the worthy gentleman loose till the lady was safe from the possibility of a second attack. It was previously settled that she should be conducted under convoy of Joe's four comrades to the Ship, (which was the name of the public house they had quitted) and put under the protection of the landlord's wife. The chaise accordingly proceeded as fast as the horses could go, till Ralph conjectured they might be near the inn; he then, without condescending to speak to the wretch he still held by the collar, shook him off, and mounting one horse and Grappling the other, followed the chaise. As our travellers galloped all the way they overtook the prize about a hundred yards from the inn, and Ralph was extremely pleased to observe that the honest sailors had, neither of them, encroached upon the delicacy of their fair charge, having all

stationed themselves on the outside. Mine host of the Ship and his good dame were upon the look-out for the return of the chaise, little expecting the success of the expedition. But when Grappling riding up bade the hostess prepare accommodations for the lady, they could not suppress their astonishment! Our hero now alighting, ran to the chaise, from whence he handed one of the most beautiful and interesting figures his eyes had ever beheld. She was equipped in a fashionable riding dress; her hair was dishevelled, and hung in ringlets down her back, and forehead, half concealing a countenance and features which caused Ralph's blood to circulate, and his pulse to beat in a very extraordinary manner. In short, gentle readers, strange as it may seem, our youth betrayed symptoms of fear and trepidation whilst conducting a very lovely girl to her apartment, though he had risked his life against "a fearful

odds" in her defence !—Some casuists, among the softer sex, may be able to account for this phenomenon; we shall not venture an opinion.

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed the lovely stranger as she sunk into a chair, "to what misery, to what degradation am I reduced?—And you, sir;" turning to Reybridge, "do you, indeed, mean to rescue me from this villanous Sir Frederick? and will you complete your generous purpose, and restore me to my friends?—But where am I now? in a common inn? good God!—what will become of me?" "Fear nothing, madam," replied our hero, "I will defend you at the hazard of my life, and safely conduct you whithersoever you shall direct. But let me request you will take some rest and refreshment, the mistress of this house is ordered to attend you to the best chamber it affords, and early to-morrow morning a post-chaise shall be ready; when, if you will

permit me, I will have the honor of placing you under the protection of your friends, where you may be secure from the farther molestation of the villain who has so infamously insulted you." Reybridge, then, without waiting for a reply in the present agitated state of the lady's spirits, withdrew, and mine hostess was ordered to give her immediate attendance, whilst the maid of the house went to prepare the fair stranger's bed-chamber. Ralph having given all other necessary directions about the post-chaise, flew to the kitchen, where the honest lads were regaling after their adventure, and shaking each by the hand vowed he would never forget the gallantry of their conduct. As for Grappling, he embraced him with great affection, and Joe returned the compliment, observing that he wished he was the young lady for his sake. "Odd's heart," continued he, "I never fell in with so fine a frigate!—

Never, since I knowed how to box the compass. And thof' she seems a little disabled in her rigging, or so, yet I should not like to be obliged to grapple wi' her at my time o' life. No, no, old Joe's planks are starting now, but you, Mr. Reybridge, are a tight ship just launched into the ocean of life, and I wish you along-side wi' all my heart." This piece of eloquence was accompanied by many expressive winks and leers, and then the worthy veteran tossed off a glass of grog to love and war. The landlord, now, entered the kitchen with a little note from the young lady to Ralph, who opened it with great emotion, and read the following words:

"Sir,

"The great obligation you have laid upon me, in preserving me from dangers I shudder to think of, and the subsequent delicacy of your conduct, have determined me wholly to confide in your

honour, and to accept of your generous offer of conducting me to my friends. In the course of an hour or two I shall be ready to pursue my journey."

Ralph having perused, and reperused this billet, placed it within the secret folds of his pocket-book, with as much care as a Mussulman would have done one of the leaves of the koran: then turning to Grappling and his comrades requested to know if he should trespass too much on their good nature by soliciting their further assistance in guarding the young lady in safety to her friends; as it was highly probable, Sir Frederick, notwithstanding the treatment he had so deservedly received, might be tempted to renew his attack in the morning. In reply to this, Joe looked rather reproachfully at our hero, and then said, "I did think, Mr. Reybridge, as how you had a better opinion of me and my messmates, here, than to

suppose, that having rescued such a noble frigate from the hands of the enemy, we should think of quitting her till we had carried her safe into port!"—Our hero acknowledged the justice of this reprimand, and was so pleased with the prompt acquiescence of the other sailors, that he did not hesitate to partake of a large can of grog that mine host had just placed upon the table, and the bashful goddess of the morning was necessarily obliged to be a witness of their revelry before the bowl was suffered to remain empty.

And now the landlord having intimated to our hero that there was the greatest likelihood of the baronet's pursuit, a post-chaise and four was immediately ordered from Salisbury, and fresh horses for the escort. Indeed, if fifty conveyances had been necessary on the present occasion, Ralph would have ordered them, without once reflecting that his whole fortune only amounted to

five guineas and some silver, part of which was already the landlord's due.

When the chaise, and post horses for Grappling and his friends arrived, the landlady made her appearance, and informed Reybridge that the pretty young lady was ready to depart, and she believed would be glad of his company. Upon this, Ralph darted out of the kitchen, but, before we bring him again into the presence of this beautiful stranger, we think it highly proper to put an end to the chapter, especially as we are about to introduce him in a new character, and to the further commiseration of our readers.

CHAP. II.

The Author presumes to address the ladies on the subject of love. Ralph and the fair stranger begin their journey. Some very interesting explanations between the parties.

I HAVE many times, in the course of this history, secretly lamented the painful necessity I have been under of keeping my hero from falling in love, and am aware that I shall extort from the lips of my fair readers many a "pho," a "'pshaw!" and a "pish!" in consequence, and that a great majority will condemn my book as a production of the kind altogether heterodox, and by no means a proper article for the dear circulating libraries. As the darts of

the fell urchin are, however, now about to be showered upon the poor youth as fast as "mill wheels strike," I shall hope to retrieve my credit, especially as I can assure my fair friends that the remaining pages, with very few exceptions, will exhibit the hero writhing under every possible torment that those fatal shafts are capable of inflicting.

If Reybridge was captivated by the fair stranger's face, at a time when disturbance and distrust had stolen the roses therefrom, how was he now fascinated, when, on entering the parlour, he beheld her animated countenance lighted up by the mingled glow of youth, health, beauty, and gratitude? Her fears were now, in a great measure, dissipated, and three hours of repose had given her sufficient strength to pursue her journey. As our hero approached, she, with a smile of gracious encouragement, begged him to be seated. "Believe me, Sir," said she, "I

feel, as I ought, the obligation I owe you, for delivering me from that bad man, Sir Frederick Lorimer. You are, Sir, I presume, in the navy?"—"No, Madam," replied Ralph, with some embarrassment, "I have not that honor. The brave sailors, to whom you are principally indebted for your deliverance, are travellers to London. I fortunately overheard the conversation of two country fellows, from which I was apprized of your danger; and, as I happened to know one of the tars, an old shipmate of mine, they all cheerfully engaged with me, in attempting your rescue."—"It will never, I fear, Sir," rejoined the lady, "be in my power to——"—"Do not, Madam," interrupted he, "do not, I beseech you, speak more of obligations. If you knew the satisfaction I now and must for ever feel, in the reflection of having been instrumental to your safety, you would own that my reward was not only ade-

quate, but infinitely superior to my services. If, however, your bounty would increase that reward, tell me only, how I may further engage myself in your cause? The villain who has wronged you, shall answer for his unmanly conduct!"—"Let me beg of you, Sir," replied the lady, "not to think of such a thing: the excellent man, to whom I am now going, and who has been to me a second father, will preserve me from the possibility of any future attack; and as to what has passed, the object of your generous indignation is too vile and contemptible to deserve further notice." Our hero was about to make a suitable rejoinder, when he was interrupted by the entrance of the landlord, who came to tell him that the chaise was ready. "And, Sir," continued he, "might I advise, you would be off as soon as may be, for several men, on horseback, have gone by, and one asked if I had seen any thing of a chaise,

and a lady in it." This intelligence renewing the fair stranger's alarms, Ralph hurried out, and summoning Grappling to him, enquired if he had seen these horsemen, and of what force they were? "Why, I can't say for sartain," replied Joe, "for I never seed 'um. But, what signifies, we must keep the better look out, that's all." Reybridge was now preparing to hand his beautiful charge into the chaise, when he recollected, for the first time, that the bill was not discharged, and, as the chaise and four, from Salisbury, was included therein, the amount, altogether, came to more than half his little fortune; and, as the village to which he was about to conduct the young lady, was twenty miles out of his way, he saw that it would be utterly impossible for him to pursue, afterwards, his journey to London, without a fresh supply. In this perplexity, however grating it was to his feelings, he was obliged to come to an explanation

with Grappling, to whom he not only related the villany of Gullum, but the disinterested liberality of honest Tom Tappum.

The old tar's lips quivered with rage at the account of the swindler's exploits. "Let me fall in wi'un, that's all!" cried he, shaking his bludgeon, "only let me fall in wi'un! If I leave a whole timber about'un, may the next can of flip be my poison!" Then, unbending his muscles a little, and drawing his leathern bag from his pocket: "Harkee! Mr. Reybridge! A seaman will hoist his boat out, d'ye see, to save even an enemy in distress; but a friend's misfortunes he should consider as his own.—Odd's heart, Sir, why I do owe all I ha' got to you! For, if I'd gone to sea in the Spitfire, (thof I did'nt, as you well know, want to shirk lieutenant Bampton) why, my old aunt, that's gone down, would ha' prophecied my death, for aught I do know, and have

left the legacy to somebody else; for the old girl was rather a queerish hippish old body, and was always seeing coffins in the fire, and shrouds in the candle! But, here, Sir," presenting the purse, which contained thirty guineas; "here's all I ha' got at present, till I gets to Lunnun, where you shall ha' the rest, if so be you'll tell me how I shall send it to your honour." Reybridge was very much affected by this proof of his old shipmate's gratitude; he would not, however, be prevailed upon to take more than ten guineas, assuring the good seaman it was amply sufficient to answer every exigency.

All accounts with mine host and hostess being now adjusted, our hero conducted the lady to the chaise, and, being permitted to take his seat by her, the party proceeded towards Blandford, it being within five miles of that town, at a place called P——n, that the friend of our young lady lived.

Ralph had now an opportunity of contemplating, without danger of interruption, the beautiful features of his lovely companion; and so fascinated was he, by the time the chaise had driven two miles, that he entirely forgot the impropriety of indulging this dangerous pleasure, at so delicate a juncture. Some little confusion, however, on the part of the lady, restored him to his senses; and, after apologizing to her for an *absence of mind*, he knew not, he said, how to account for, he ventured to ask her if her friend at Petherton was an inhabitant of that town.—"He is, Sir," replied the fair stranger, "the rector of the village, and one of the best of men."—"A clergyman, Madam, is he?" replied our hero with a sigh! "I once had a friend of that sacred profession: perhaps I have one still. He, too, is one of the best of men. Oh! my revered tutor, may I still hope for your forgiveness?"—Ralph was about

to apologize for this egotism, when his fair companion, looking earnestly at him, and blushing extremely; "I know not what it is, Sir," said she, "that makes me think, notwithstanding circumstances and appearances, your name, Sir—is it it not Reybridge?"—"It is, Madam," replied our astonished hero.—"Indeed, Sir," continued the young lady, "I could not have been a moment in doubt of this circumstance, from the time I first saw you, had I not lately been assured you were abroad; so exactly do you answer to the description I have frequently heard given of you, by that venerable friend, who, (unaccountable as your neglect of him may have been) has never ceased to love you!"—"Gracious heaven! Madam!" exclaimed Reybridge, "what is it you say? You know Mr. Denham then? Perhaps—(and yet it is scarcely possible) it is to *his* protection I am now about to consign you,—"It is, indeed, Sir," an-

swered the lady, "and I am convinced I shall be the happy cause of restoring to his affections his much injured pupil! Indeed, Mr. Reybridge, your whole conduct too clearly proves that you have both been vilely imposed upon. My name, Sir, may not, perhaps, be unknown to you; it is Leybrook."—"Most wonderful!" replied Ralph, "the beautiful ward of the earl of Ardendale, and—the future wife of his son," our poor youth was going to say, but the words, like Macbeth's, stuck in his throat. For, in one moment, he saw his infant affection nipped in the bud, and no longer to be indulged, but at the expence of his honour.

"Your tutor, Sir," continued Miss Leybrook, "thinks you are in the East Indies, and has been further taught to believe you owed your establishment, there, to the bounty of the person who was left your guardian. Is it so, Sir?"—"I do not deny, Madam," returned

Ralph, "that Mr. Valpine supplied me with money, but whether it was his own, or the property of *another*, remains yet to be proved.—Of Mr. Denham's forgiveness of my former follies, I may yet then venture, you say, to flatter myself; for, if he yet loves, he will surely forgive me, when he knows the misfortunes which have befallen me. And yet, would he not have answered my last penitential letter?"—"Your *last letter?*" exclaimed Miss Leybrook, "when was this written?"—"It was written, Madam," replied Ralph, "just before I quitted England."—"And you had written several prior to that period?"—"Several," rejoined our hero, "but my tutor never replying to them, I had reason to think he had cast me off for ever. My only hope is, now, that he has never received my letters."—"And your conjecture, Sir," replied Miss Leybrook, "is true. Good God! What villany is this! You have the

copies of these letters?"—"I have," replied Ralph, "but, for Heaven's sake, Madam, keep me no longer in anxiety, concerning yourself! How is it I see a young lady of your rank and pretensions, supported by such protection as lord Ardendale's, thus separated from your friends, by the artifices of an infamous libertine? May not there be a similarity in our fates? May we not both have suffered from the same treacherous source? Valpine is living in the family of lord Ardendale; is he not, Madam?"—"He is, Sir," returned Miss Leybrook, "but *my* misfortunes spring from a dislike, which I cannot surmount, to the man, of all others in the world, it would have been my wish to have honoured and esteemed. I will relate some circumstances of my history to you, Mr. Reybridge; you will then judge how far I may be justified in the steps I have taken, and whether, consistently with my own

happiness, or safety, I could have done otherwise."— Ralph having expressed his gratitude for so charming a confidence, in terms as polite as the sensations of his heart would permit, the beautiful ward of lord Ardendale began as will be set forth in the following Chapter.

CHAP. III.

Miss Leybrook begins her history.—The convoy dismissed.

"On the death of my beloved grandfather," said she, "the late lord Leybrook, I was left sole heiress of his large estates in Northamptonshire. In his last moments, he tenderly pressed me to engage my promise that I would unite my fortunes with those of my guardian's only son, the present lord Westmere, provided my affections should be free, and I saw nothing in his lordship's character which should give me just reasons to dislike him. 'I will not, my dear girl,' continued this indulgent parent, 'insist upon an unconditional engagement.—But the earl of Arden-dale's misfortunes in the early part of

his life;--(these misfortunes Mr. Reybridge, you are perhaps unacquainted with, but Mr. Denham will one day disclose them to you) have so much endeared him to me, that I could wish, if possible, a union of our families. If any degrading vices or follies should force you to despise him, I absolve you:—Do not marry him. But then, dear Louisa, remember not to disgrace the dignity of your family by bestowing your affections on an unworthy object. Recollect the respect due to yourself, and promise me, solemnly promise me, in these my last moments, that you will not unite with meanness or obscurity. Let him you wed be, at least, a gentleman of character and connexion, and I shall be satisfied.' Could I answer otherwise, Mr. Reybridge to this kind, this generous relation, than by yielding implicit obedience to his request?—On my knees, and whilst I bathed his hand with my tears, I vowed to obey him.

My revered grandfather soon after expired in my arms, and I had scarcely recovered from the first shock occasioned by his death, although an event, at his time of life, every hour to be expected, when the fond old nurse that attended me informed me that she had received instructions from my guardian, to remove with me to Rothwell Castle *till the* funeral ceremony should be over.

"The deaths of the late earl and countess of Ardendale had not long preceded that of my venerable grandfather, and gloomy indeed was the period at which the present earl took possession of the seat of his ancestors. The remains of the baron of Leybrook were attended to the grave by lord Ardendale; but lord Westmere was not present, a circumstance which (as I already looked upon him as the man to whom I was in future to pledge my love and obedience) not only surprised, but grieved me. But Oh! Mr. Reybridge,

when a few days after the solemn ceremony he *did* visit the castle, his sullen deportment—his haughty and contemptuous treatment of those beneath him, shocked, and alarmed me. With such a man my heart, my reason told me I could never expect happiness. Mr. Denham, from the first moment I saw him, engaged all my attention. I need not, Mr. Reybridge, describe his excellencies to you; suffice it to say, that I felt an assurance, whatever might be my future determinations with regard to lord Westmere, I could as safely confide in him, as to the beloved relation I had lost.

"Not many months before the baron's death, a lady, who had, with exemplary attention to her trust, superintended my education, was obliged to leave me. To supply her place, more as a companion, than a governess, lord Ardendale introduced to me a gentlewoman of the name of Rushden. Mr. Rushden, the

husband, was also introduced as his lordship's steward; a gentleman, who, though he had been unfortunate in life, was still, in consideration of his birth and education, entitled to more than the common attention attached to this subordinate situation. In the lady I found little to attract. With somewhat of good nature, there was, notwithstanding, a flippant impertinence, and a certain vulgarity in her manner and speech, which offended, sometimes, even to disgust. The husband had certainly the manners of a gentleman, but little could be collected from his conversation; for he seldom entered into discourse, and seemed glad of every opportunity of withdrawing from society altogether. Yet Mr. Rushden's reserve seemed to be the reserve of sorrow, more than of discontent, suspicion, or malignity. Whatever his griefs were I know not; —He is now released from them!

"At the expiration of the summer

months, lord Westmere, who had a yet paid me no more than common attention, obtained permission of the earl to visit the metropolis for the winter, notwithstanding Mr. Denham's opposition; who in vain pointed out to his lordship the danger to be apprehended from his contracting too early a taste for the dissipations of the town. The earl, though on general occasions he submitted to the decisions of Mr. Denham, especially on matters which regarded lord Westmere, yet, contrived, on the present, to over-rule this excellent tutor's objections, and the young man was permitted to depart with an equipage and attendants suitable to his rank; orders having been previously sent to have the town residence in Grosvenor-square fitted up for his reception. Though lord Ardendale took the precaution of recommending his son to the attention of such families as he knew would only introduce him among

the most respectable circles of society, yet it could not be supposed that this indulgent parent was insensible to the many evil temptations to which he would be exposed. But his lordship was as equally desirous as my grandfather had been that the families of Ardendale and Leybrook should be united, and was fearful of thwarting any of his projects, lest, aware of the sullenness of his disposition, he should, in his turn, prove refractory. Lord Ardendale had not yet opened his mind to me on the subject of the marriage I now so much dreaded, yet he knew that the old baron had spoken of it to me before his death. On the departure of lord Westmere for London, however, Mr. Denham was deputed to sound my inclinations, which he did in the tenderest and most delicate manner. He told me that my guardian was extremely anxious that the wedding should be celebrated the moment I came of age, and that we should reside for the

first six months after our marriage in an old family mansion called Iversfield, in Ireland, where, during many years of their lives his lordship and his son had resided. I do not think that either the earl or his venerable chaplain were aware of the probability of my objecting to this arrangement. My extreme youth; my total ignorance of the customs of the world; the little likelihood of my having formed any prior attachment, were all circumstances so favourable to my acquiescence, that no doubt had been entertained of it. I am led to draw this conclusion, from the surprise and disappointment visible in Mr. Denham's features on my testifying the strong disinclination I felt to the match, or that it should at the time proposed, or at any other period, take place.

"I will not trouble you, Mr. Reybridge, with a relation of the several conversations that followed between us on this subject. Yet, anxious as my

respected friend evidently was to forward the union in question, and many, as he made it appear, were the advantages accruing from it, he owned, that, on the other hand, all temporal considerations ought to give way to the sacred obligations of religion. That a marriage of compulsion, or even strong indifference militated against the express intention of that solemn institution, and that whilst esteem on either side was wanting, he would never give his support to the union.

"But although the mild Mr. Denham admitted the force of my objections, lord Ardendale was not so easy of conviction. Unprepared for a disappointment so mortifying, and possessing no small portion of his late father's pride, he remonstrated with me on the inconsistency of my conduct, and recapitulated in more lively, though not more persuasive terms, his chaplain's arguments. He urged the necessity of my

being ushered into the world in a manner that would do justice to what he was pleased to call my talents and accomplishments: that it was a duty I owed to myself, as well as to the venerable baron whose name it remained with me to hand down to posterity with undiminished lustre. 'Of my son,' continued the earl, 'of his merits or demerits, another year will the better enable me to speak. Much is to be expected from the zealous endeavours of his excellent tutor; and, though a life of seclusion may have cast some shades over a character, naturally reserved, yet a more familiar intercourse with society will soon rectify these trifling imperfections.'

"Notwithstanding all his arguments, I declined giving any positive promise to receive Lord Westmere's addresses; and the earl, however reluctantly, was compelled to drop the subject till the return of his son from London, 'when,'

said he, 'I hope Westmere will himself renew it; and with more success.'

"It was about this time, sir, that the good Mr. Denham received a packet of letters from a friend of the name of Shepperton; and so great was the effect of the contents upon his mind, that the earl remarked his uneasiness, and requesting an explanation in my presence; the good man, to the best of my recollection, thus replied:——'I have more than once presumed to remind your lordship of your promises in favour of the young man I once called my adopted child. I have not renewed the subject lately, because I have, from time to time, heard of his falling off from virtue, and total forgetfulness of those precepts I took so much pains to inculcate in his mind—I grieve to add that I have lately been furnished with such incontestable proofs of his degeneracy, that I can no longer entertain a hope of his amendment, and this conviction, my

lord, will embitter the future hours of my life!—for, indeed, I loved him! had he been my own son I could not have loved him more!'

"Lord Ardendale then enquired into the nature of your faults, and Mr. Denham produced certain papers, what they were I know not, which convinced the earl that sufficient provocation had been given, on your part, to warrant the good man's renunciation of you."

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Ralph, "what papers were those?—Believe me, madam, they were forgeries!—they must have been forgeries invented for my destruction!"

"I doubt it not, sir," replied Miss Leybrook, "especially as the greatest stress laid upon your ill conduct by your venerable tutor, was your never answering letters of the highest importance which had been sent to you by him, and which you have now so solemnly declared never to have received. These letters,

as well as your own, must have been intercepted.

"Not long after, a letter was sent by Mr. Valpine, informing your tutor, that in compassion to your misfortunes, and out of respect to the memory of the old lady whose name you bear, he had procured you a situation abroad, and that you would embark for Madras in a few days. About this time you must have written your *last letter*, but Mr. Denham never received it; and your supposed silence on an event so important, confirmed him in the opinion of your ingratitude, and he resolved if possible to think no more about you.

"Notwithstanding the unequivocal declaration I had given not to enter into any immediate engagement with lord Westmere, the earl, at this period, resolved that Iversfield should be made ready for our reception, and accordingly Mr. and Mrs. Rushden were deputed to visit the estate for a few weeks, to

superintend any little alterations or repairs that might be wanting, and prepare the tenants and domestics for the approach of their master and mistress; —I remonstrated against this precipitate measure, but all in vain;—the Rushdens departed, but departed, unfortunate people, never to return! the packet in which they embarked for Ireland was lost off the coast of Wales, and they were among the sufferers that perished!—Lord Westmere had returned from London a few days only previously to the Rushdens quitting Northamptonshire;—and as Mr. Rushden had always possessed more of the young lord's confidence than any other person, it was not without a considerable degree of uneasiness he heard of the probable fate that had befallen him. So anxious, indeed, was he to ascertain whether these unhappy people had perished or not, that he set off, attended by two servants, to Holyhead, to make enquiries about

them. There was a kindness in this anxiety for the fate of people for whom his father had always expressed great regard, that I confess inspired me with a more favourable opinion of his lordship's heart, than I had hitherto entertained; but this favourable impression in his favor was soon removed on his return. A few months residence in town had, indeed, corrected the moroseness of his disposition, but it had opened it to the love of licentious pleasures, and lord Ardendale was convinced, when it was too late, that he had thrown an obstacle in the way of Mr. Denham's future endeavours to confirm him in the principles of virtue, that no art could remove. The only hope to save him was by prevailing upon me to consent to receive him as my future husband. Lord Westmere, prompted, perhaps, more by my fortune than any other consideration, was now or pretended to be, my passionate admirer;—but his addresses

were couched in terms I could scarcely understand, though it was evident his heart was very little interested in the success of his suit.

"Mr. Denham, ever anxious for the honor and happiness of the earl, now made another effort for his son; and, being still in the capacity of his tutor, to bring him back to his studies, and to a due sense of the value of those principles and attainments which could alone preserve the dignity of the illustrious house of which he was the heir. These generous endeavours only paved the way for that revolution in our domestic establishment from which I may date the persecutions I have since endured. During lord Westmere's *journey* from Holyhead, after a fruitless enquiry concerning the unfortunate Rushdens, one of his servants met with an accident at Shrewsbury, occasioned by a fall from his horse; and as the disaster happened near the house of Mr. and Mrs. Valpine, they

took the poor man in, and for several days attended to his hurts with so much humanity, that lord Westmere, grateful for the care shown to a favourite servant, proposed to Mr. Valpine any compensation that lay in his power. The circumstances of this gentleman, were, I believe, at that time, in no very flourishing condition, and, after some further conversations on the subject, his lordship persuaded himself that the situations vacated by the untimely fate of Mr. and Mrs. Rushden, would be highly acceptable to them. Accordingly, soon after his return to Rothwell Castle, he proposed the matter to his father, but the earl was some time before he consented to the arrangement, and Mr. Denham opposed it with a warmth that too clearly manifested his conviction of the duplicity of Valpine's character, and the fatal consequences of such a connexion to Lord Westmere. As, however, it happened that a half

promise had been previously given, in a letter to Valpine by this precipitate young man, Lord Ardendale, after some consideration of the matter, decided that the promise could not honourably be retracted, and Mr. and Mrs. Valpine were invited to the castle accordingly.

"The good earl was however extremely shocked, when the venerable Mr. Denham, the morning after, told him, that he could no longer have the honor of continuing in his family. 'Do not, nevertheless,' said the good man, 'imagine that I depart ungrateful and dissatisfied from your hospitable mansion. No,—heaven is my witness, I do not!—but with Valpine, my lord, I cannot live. There is a mystery about his character that has already involved, and indeed continues to involve, my mind in the most painful perplexity; and he will bring daily recollections to it that it is now but ill able to bear."

"I will not, Mr. Reybridge, waste time in enumerating the arguments which followed on both sides, for and against this removal. The living of P——n in the gift of the bishop of L—— happened to be then vacant, of which circumstance Mr. Denham had been apprized by his friend Mr. Shepperton a few days before, and he had influence sufficient to be preferred to the benefice. In the course of a fortnight after all previous matters being settled, this excellent friend left the castle.

"The conduct of the earl when taking leave of this good man, though kind and respectful, was not attended with that cordiality I could have wished. His son was still more cold, and it evidently appeared that some lurking suggestions of family pride had succeeded in throwing a damp upon the separation. On parting with me, he tenderly saluted me. 'I leave you, my dear young lady,' said he, 'to the direction of your

own excellent understanding, and I have little doubt but it will finally lead you to the best decision on a certain subject. If you can satisfy yourself that your heart may, in time, be brought to approve of lord Westmere, in consideration of many good and estimable qualities that may yet, in the course of a little time, burst forth, do not let any frivolous objections arise to his prejudice, but consider that the best of us have our weaknesses in the sight of heaven, to a miserable degree; that our tempers are wavering, and our judgments fallible.

"'Having said thus much in favour of this young man's pretensions, I must on the other hand observe, that his conduct, of late, has been very much tinctured with levity, and I would by no means advise you, to listen even, to the addresses of a libertine. Time only, my sweet girl, can make him now, I fear, sensible to your merits, and that time

must be very differently employed from what it has lately been. If he takes Valpine as his companion to London, I dread to think of the consequences to my noble friend.

"'Adieu!' continued he again embracing me, 'and remember my last words:—do nothing in direct opposition to the dictates of your reason and your conscience, but should you, in the contest, be exposed to the least persecution, either from the weakness of the father, or the intemperate proceedings of the son;—fly to me, and I will receive and protect you.'"

Here the post-boy stopping to water his horses, Reybridge earnestly entreated the fair narrator to alight and take some refreshment, if breakfast could not immediately be procured!—"You are, now, Miss Leybrook," said he, "safe from all immediate pursuit; for had your persecutors taken this road this morning, we should long since have

fallen in with them." As our hero spoke these words, and whilst he handed his lovely charge out of the chaise he could not avoid gazing upon her with more earnestness and admiration than mere civility prescribed. Ralph, indeed, was more deeply smitten than he had dared to enquire either of his honour or prudence. Love and romance had, however, taken the helm from reason, and he was contented, like a bold knight errant, to enjoy his fairy dreams of happiness, though his conscience told him they would leave him surrounded by greater difficulties and distresses than he had ever yet encountered.

Whilst breakfast was getting ready, Reybridge enquired of the landlady, who came to offer her services to the lady, if any horses or carriages of a particular description had passed by that morning, and being answered in the negative, he concluded that the pursuers had either taken a different route, or

given up the chase altogether, and therefore judged it unnecessary to retain the honest sailors in his cause any longer, especially as the rest of the way to P——n lay through cross roads. Having accordingly summoned Grappling from the kitchen, he explained the matter to him, and, after many cordial thanks for his own and his companions faithful and gallant services, desired to be informed of their names and places of abode, that he might take the earliest opportunity of rewarding their bravery as it deserved. Upon this, Joe, as on a former occasion, applied his fingers to his mouth, and his messmates obeying the summons, "Well, my lads," said he, "we must 'bout ship, it seems. But, howsomever, it be no matter. Only I know many good vessels have fallen into the enemy's mouth within a league of the shore, and thof they thought themselves never so safe, d'ye see."

Reybridge again explained, and, having at length satisfied the good fellows that no further danger was to be apprehended, he renewed his acknowledgments. "As for you, Joe," said he turning to Grappling, "I have a long arrears to settle with you; but, by the blessing of heaven, it will be in my power, some of these odd days, to pay them off with interest."—"Why as to that there, d'ye see," replied Joe, "I shall never think of taking an observation about the matter; and as for arrears and all that, I never heard the word mentioned except once in palavering with our purser about slops. The short and the long of the matter, is, Mr. Reybridge, that in point of friendly offices you well know how the wind sets in that quarter; and that I should deserve to be ducked at the yard arm if ever I forget your'n to me. As for my messmates, here, why they be a bit of myself as 'twere, and have stuck by me

as thof I was a nine pounder in the face of the enemy!—And so d'ye see as they've shared all my dangers, why d——e they shall share all my good fortune!—Howsomever, sir, if we should happen to separate in some unforeseen squall, of which there be many, no doubt, in life; and your honour happens to be in snug moorings;—why we shall know where we shall be welcome to repair our rigging,—and so the great Commander of all bless you my young hero!"

Ralph now called for pen, ink and paper, and having given Joe a written acknowledgment for the money he had borrowed of him, and taken a memorandum of where he was to be heard of in London, they all saluted him with three cheers, and departed.

Our hero having thus disposed of his cavalcade, returned to Miss Leybrook, who, much to his confusion, had been waiting breakfast for him: but when

he attempted to make an apology, she prevented him with a grace so sweet, and a look so benign, that he was afraid to trust his lips with another word lest they should have betrayed the emotions of his heart.

After breakfast, our young couple resumed their seats in the post-chaise, and Reybridge, with a palpitating heart, heard the landlord direct the postillion to the Parsonage-house at P——n. Miss Leybrook then continued her story in the words of the next Chapter.

CHAP. IV.

Miss Leybrook continues and concludes her History.—The travellers arrive at P——n.

"Mr. Valpine," continued Miss Leybrook, "did not arrive at Rothwell-castle at the time he was expected, on account of the sudden indisposition of his wife; and his second letter to the young lord gave information of her death. About a fortnight after this event, he made his appearance, and immediately took charge of the important office of his predecessor. I will not take up your attention, Mr. Reybridge, by detailing the many changes and revolutions, that, from the time of this man's admission into the family, were continually taking place. With admirable insinuation, he

not only secured the confidence and friendship of Westmere, but even the earl's approbation, who every day seemed more and more attracted by his manners and conversation.

"For my own part, I had paid stricter attention to what Mr. Denham had said concerning this plausible gentleman, and only regarded his character with distrust. But let me hasten to the events that brought me to the brink of that dreadful precipice, from whence your bravery rescued me. Valpine was no sooner established in his official situation, than lord Westmere renewed his addresses with more eagerness than ever. Yet he sought not to win me by those delicate attentions, and that deference of conduct which my youth and inexperience so evidently demanded. His visits were abrupt, his manners presuming, his conversation frivolous, and sometimes offensive. Lord Ardendale beheld, with the keenest regret, the vain

and unprofitable bent of his son's mind, and was of the same opinion with Mr. Denham, that his union with me was the only chance left him of escaping the gulf of extravagance and dissipation. —Mr. Valpine, who, on several occasions had been officious enough to offer me his advice, now undertook to prescribe a remedy for my insensibility.'—'I am not astonished,' said he, one day to the earl, 'that your lovely ward, my lord, should feel so irresolute on the subject of marriage. I confess I should have been surprised had she shown less reluctance in coming to a determination. She has led too much the life of a recluse, to be competent to judge of the comforts and advantages of matrimony; and, in my humble opinion, your lordship should visit the metropolis for a few months. I should conceive it would be highly proper that Miss Leybrook, as the representative of a very ancient and illustrious family,

should be presented at court, and I am well persuaded your lordship will think this a circumstance deserving of some consideration.'—'Why, to say the truth,' replied the earl, 'this is a business, the propriety of which never struck me before, and the old baron, though he never mentioned a particular wish to this effect, might, perhaps, have considered it as a matter of course.'—'No doubt he did,' rejoined Westmere, 'and my lovely cousin will, I am confident, see the propriety of such an introduction, though I should hope it would be, ultimately, as lady Westmere.'—'In a word, Mr. Reybridge, the earl agreed to pass the winter in town, and immediate preparations were made at his lordship's house, in Grosvenor-square, for our reception. I shall not detail the particulars of our journey; suffice it to say, that a few weeks residence in London involved me in the full vortex of dissipation; and I will not deny,

that, buried as I had hitherto been in obscurity, I was a little fascinated at first by its various allurements. The fashionable swarm that flocked round me, the balls, plays, concerts, and masquerades, I was continually enticed to, made me for a while forget the peaceful shades of Northamptonshire; but the charm vanished with its novelty, and long have I sighed to return once more to the romantic woods and vales that adorn the venerable edifices of Rothwell and Leybrook. Lord Ardendale continued to postpone my introduction at court, still flattering himself with the hope that I would consent to go thither as his daughter. In the mean time, I was exposed not only to lord Westmere's importunities, but the ruder addresses of several men, who presumed to call themselves friends;—among these, was the author of my late distresses.

"Sir Frederick Lorimer was looked upon, in the circles of fashion, as a young

baronet of superior figure and address, a proof of which he gave, by taking occasion, only the third time I had ever the misfortune of seeing him, to pay me such particular attention, that I was obliged to leave the room in confusion. Not at all daunted, however, by this repulse, and conceiving that a title, great riches, and a handsome person, gave him an indisputable right to insult me, he, at our next meeting, made an abrupt declaration of his passion, though he was well acquainted with lord Ardendale's wishes in favour of his son, and did not know but that I fully approved of them. I was, at this time, unacquainted with the detestable principles of the wretch, or I should have felt horror, as well as astonishment and indignation, at an avowal so unexpected. I instantly left the room, but not before I had warned him against the repetition of an insult, which would

oblige me to acquaint lord Ardendale of his presumption.

"Sir Frederick did not think it prudent, after this threat, to renew his insolent addresses; but lord Westmere's importunities became more and more urgent, and he even went so far, as to propose a day for our union. In vain did I appeal to the earl: wrapped up in the contemplation of his favourite project, he seemed to have forgotten what was due to my situation as his ward, and rather peevishly observed:— 'that as I had not positively declared my determination on the subject, some allowance must be made for a young man so entirely devoted to me as his son was.'—'And, indeed, my dear Louisa,' continued he, 'I cannot dissemble my astonishment, that, possessing so good an understanding as you certainly do, you should find it so difficult to return the affection of one who loves you so

sincerely. You are above entertaining any romantic notions—neither the person nor the disposition of Westmere, can be reasonably objected to, making some little allowances for the influence of education. His temper is, I own, sometimes irritable, but the soothing attentions of an amiable woman, whose beauty, and whose merits, must always command respect, cannot fail of rectifying it. Do then, my dear girl, strive to overcome any trifling disinclination you may feel towards the accomplishment, not only of mine, but your worthy grandfather's wishes, and it will, I am convinced, be the chief study of my son's life, to make you happy.'—'Alas! Mr. Reybridge, what could I say to this? The earl had ever behaved to me in the kindest manner, and was certainly entitled, both from his many virtues, and, as he was my guardian, to my respect and duty. These considerations, and the remembrance of my beloved

grandfather's dying request, would have removed every scruple, had not an accidental conversation, soon after, with this violent young man, convinced me that the asperity of his temper was not so much the effect of habit and education, as a constitutional infirmity, which the mildest submissions would never be able to subdue.

"During this conversation, which only took place the day before yesterday, I frankly told him, that in consequence of what had passed between my guardian and me, on the subject of our marriage, I might, possibly, when I came of age, consent to be his wife, provided I saw no just ground for altering my present opinion of him. 'What, Madam!' exclaimed he, apparently thrown off his guard, 'must I wait till you are of age?'—'Yes, my lord,' replied I, sharply, 'and till that time, I must be allowed to inform you, that I cannot, nor I will not, submit to your

further importunities. Whatever your lordship may think of hasty marriages, I am of opinion, that they are seldom, if indeed ever, prosperous. If the affection which you say you have for me, be of that quality to ensure tranquillity to either of us, a probation of only two years, will rather increase, than diminish it.'—'By heavens! Madam!' exclaimed he, with an impetuosity that made me start, 'I cannot believe, after this, that you will ever have me! Your design is obviously to drag me in your chains, so long as you can gratify that vanity which is inseparable from your sex, and which I find is able to bury, even in Miss Leybrook's remembrance, a just sense of propriety, and the obligations of gratitude!'—I cannot, Mr. Reybridge, describe to you the painful indignation with which I was oppressed, by an accusation so false and so presumptuous. I disdained any reply, but hastening from him to my

chamber, resolved never to hold converse with him, if possible, again.

"During the rest of the day, I confined myself to my room. Westmere made several ineffectual efforts to see me, but I peremptorily refused to listen to any attempt at a justification, even from lord Ardendale himself, whom I was grieved to find weak enough to offer it on such an occasion. I now recollected the parting expressions of my venerable friend, Mr. Denham, to fly to him if exposed to persecution, and to receive from him protection. From the earl, blindly partial to an only son, and resolved, as he had now shown himself, to support his pretensions to my favour, even at the expense of every delicate consideration, I could not expect to find this protection; to my friend, the rector, I resolved to go. His age and profession sufficiently shielded me from any scandalous insinuations, and I knew I should find not only security, but hap-

piness, in his peaceful mansion, till the expiration of my minority.

"Having imparted my determination to a faithful female servant, in whom I knew I could confide, I bade her lose no time in preparing every thing for our departure, which I settled should be the following morning, (yesterday). A post-chaise was accordingly ordered to be in readiness, at the corner of the Square, at five o'clock; and though I trembled at the idea of travelling with only a female companion, yet, as I was certain of reaching P——n before dusk, I determined to venture. Indeed, there was scarcely any risk I would not have ran, rather than have been again subjected to the insolence of lord Westmere.

"Every thing being arranged, and the few articles of apparel I wanted, being packed up, I judged it would be prudent to be present in the drawing-room in the evening, to avoid the pos-

sibility of any suspicion being entertained of my intentions. The earl seemed highly pleased at my sudden appearance, which was evidently unexpected. Westmere had ordered the carriage to go to the opera, and thought it best to leave his cause in the hands of his father and Mr. Valpine, who, you will be surprised to hear, Mr. Reybridge, has gained such an ascendancy over the minds of both the earl and his son, that he is considered as the oracle of the family, nor is any thing proposed, or carried into execution, without his concurrence.

"Lord Ardendale, to my great relief, did not touch on the subject of Westmere's offence, yet I could not observe that he had the least suspicion of my intended flight. Valpine, however, regarded me frequently with a look that seemed to read every secret of my heart; and when I retired to my chamber, I could not help fancying

that my whole scheme was known to him.

"Angry as I was with the earl, I could not think of abruptly quitting his house, without explaining my motive; I also thought it proper to tell him, to whose protection I had committed myself, as I was satisfied his lordship, both from principle and pride, would never suffer his son to offer me further molestation. Having written this explanatory letter, which I concluded by assuring the earl I would immediately return, either to Grosvenor-square, or Rothwell-castle, if he would pledge me his solemn promise, that I should never more be persecuted by the addresses of his son. I sealed and directed it, and my maid placed it in such a manner on my toilet, that it could not be overlooked.

"As I had, on the instant of resolving on my flight, dispatched a letter to Mr. Denham, to acquaint him of my inten-

tions, I was under no apprehension of his being unprepared to receive me: my fears principally arose from the possibility of any noise disturbing the family in the morning, and lest some of the servants should observe me before I could get safely seated in the post-chaise. My maid, however, managed matters so well, that the street-door was opened without the least difficulty, and a porter stood ready to receive my trunk.

"A few minutes brought us to the chaise, and we were soon transported from the smoke of the town. The certainty of having thus escaped from Westmere, inspired me with unusual spirits. Of the wretch, Sir Frederick Lorimer, I had not a thought. I remember now to have heard of an elegant mansion belonging to him in Wiltshire; but it had never once occurred to me, that I must pass by it in my way to P——n, and if it had, I should

have felt little alarmed by the circumstance, since scarcely any other accident, save the one which actually did happen, could possibly have thrown me into the power of its unworthy owner.

"We were going on at a good pace, when my maid observed that the post-boy appeared to be in liquor, and indeed the wretch flogged his poor horses in so unmerciful a manner, going up a steep hill, that I called out to him, and desired him to desist. The fellow, however, did not seem to heed what I had said, and, soon after, one of the poor animals beginning to plunge, a part of the harness broke, and we were obliged to stop very near the lane which led to Coverley-lodge. I requested the postillion to be as quick as possible in repairing the damage; in the mean time I observed several men on horseback, approaching; yet, still I had no apprehension of molestation, till, to my utter confusion and terror, I recognised Sir

Frederick Lorimer! The wretch instantly jumped from his horse, pretended to be much vexed at the accident that had happened, and begged, in the most submissive language, that I would give his *sister*, Miss Lorimer, the pleasure of my company, till the damage was repaired. Oh! Mr. Reybridge, think what my feelings must have been at this painful moment. From the character of a professed libertine, with power and affluence sufficient to screen him from the consequences of almost any violence, what delicacy of conduct was to be expected? What shocking insults were not to be apprehended? I now, too, recollected, with renewed alarm, the repulse, though deserved, which I had given him at lord Ardendale's, and I could not help fancying I beheld, in the villain's eyes, a kind of triumphant malignity, from which I shuddered to draw a presage.

"I was obliged, however, to descend

from the chaise, for my spirits began to droop, and I confess I was afraid of irritating a man who had me so wholly in his power, and whose intentions, whatever they might be, I was aware no principle, either of morality or humanity, could set aside! My resolution did not, however, quite forsake me. I declined his repeated invitations to his house, as politely as I could, but he was deaf to entreaties and expostulations. I now assumed a false courage, and warned him of the consequences of his unwarrantable conduct; but he only laughed at my threats, at the same time assuring me that I should be treated with all imaginable respect. Thus, Mr. Reybridge, hemmed in as I was on all sides, by the villain's servants, my own poor maid, partly from her own terrors, and fears for me, having fallen into an hysteric fit, you will not wonder that I was, by degrees, forced along; my spirits, however, forsook me before

I reached the lodge, and, in spite of every effort, I fainted away.

"On recovering, I found myself in an elegant saloon, attended by a young lady, of a genteel appearance, who informed me that *her brother*, Sir Frederick, was extremely grieved at what had happened, but that he begged I would acquit him of the least intention to offend me, since he had acted consistently with what he conceived to be his duty towards the ward of his friend, lord Ardendale, seeing her in so perilous and unprotected a situation. This plausible excuse it was in vain to object to, especially as Miss Lorimer assured me that I might rely upon the most respectful treatment from the baronet, if I would only consent to take some refreshment and repose.

"I was too much exhausted to make any further objections, and having drank a cup of tea, I retired to a chamber, but refused to lie down on the bed, till Miss

Lorimer solemnly assured me she would sit down by me while I slept. My first enquiries, on waking, were for my poor maid. I was told she was still ill, but the greatest care would be taken of her, and that she should be sent to me the moment she was able to leave her room. With this answer I was obliged to be satisfied, and, soon after, the hateful Sir Frederick sent to beg I would allow his sister to conduct me to the drawing-room, where he waited to apologize for his late conduct.

"To this message, I begged Miss Lorimer to inform her brother, in reply, that the best reparation in his power now to make, was to allow a post-chaise to be ready early in the morning, to carry me to P——n; but that I begged to be left to myself for that evening. She had not long left me, before I heard a noise on the stairs, and the terrible voice of Sir Frederick pronounce these words: 'Well, if the lady won't come

to the gentleman, the gentleman must go to the lady, that's all!' I was, beyond expression, shocked at the idea of the wretch intruding upon me in my bed-chamber; and, consequently, running out, desired the maid who attended me, to tell her master I would wait upon him in the drawing-room, immediately. Thither, therefore, I was obliged to repair, expecting, of course, to see the person who called herself Miss Lorimer; but she was absent, and that moment the suspicion darted across my mind, that ———. Excuse me, Mr. Reybridge, but you will easily guess what I mean."—" Alas! dear Madam," replied Ralph, with emotion; " the atrocious villainy is but too obvious. Infamous wretch!" continued he, the blood mounting in his face. " But I beg your pardon, Madam; this is not a time—yet—patience, in such a case, it is not in nature to preserve!"

Miss Leybrook here heaved a sigh,

which, though it would scarcely have disturbed the down on a thistle, was heard by our hero, and raised such a tempest about his heart, that its fury must have been noticed by his fair companion, but for the rattling of the chaise-wheels.

The fair narrator continued :—

"Not perceiving the lady, I should have withdrawn immediately, but the odious baronet was too quick for me, and, seizing my hand, compelled me to be seated.—'I can never be sufficiently grateful to fortune,' began he, forcibly detaining my trembling hand, 'for having once more given me so fair an opportunity of renewing my addresses to Miss Leybrook, nor can I help hoping and believing, that, notwithstanding the severity of her former behaviour, she may yet be inclined to favour my suit.' —'And, on what foundation,' replied I, 'Sir Frederick, can you presume to build this hope ?'—'Madam,' answered

he, 'I will deal candidly with you; I love you! And though I have been striving all in my power to get the better of a passion you so highly disapprove, yet I find that the bare recollection of your beauty and accomplishments, bids defiance to every effort. You are now under my roof, and I am resolved to convince you, if it be possible, that the possession of a heart so truly devoted as mine, will be no mean prize even to the beautiful Miss Leybrook.'—'Let me go, Sir!' cried I, starting indignantly from his grasp, and endeavouring to ring the bell.—'Whither would you go?' replied he, 'thus unattended, and without protection, the fair heiress of Leybrook must excuse me, if I conceive her journey to have been without her guardian's permission, and even without his knowledge! Consider, my dear Madam, that as matters have turned out, it may not, hereafter, be heard without some slight surprise, that my

charming Louisa spent *a pleasant evening* at the seat of Sir Frederick Lorimer, in the course of her little peregrination.'—Entirely thrown off my guard by this vile insinuation, I burst into tears, but it was in vain I endeavoured to escape from this monster—'Upon my soul!' continued he, 'I do not deserve, Miss Leybrook, to be thus suspected. My intentions are honourable, and if you will but consent to be mine, my hand and fortune shall be at your disposal to-morrow!'—'Leave me, Sir,' replied I, ready to faint with terror, 'I conjure you, for the present, to leave me!'—'Well, Madam,' answered he, 'to convince you of the power you have over me, I will leave you. Nay, more, I will urge my suit no further to night, but to morrow morning let me hope the fair arbitress of my destiny, will, at length, be disposed to crown the happiness of her adoring Lorimer!'—Oh! Mr. Reybridge, think how my pride

was mortified, at being addressed in language so degrading—the fulsome, common-place cant of modern novels. The wretch, however, departed before I could make any reply, and presently the maid conducted me to my bed-chamber. I enquired for Miss Lorimer and my own servant, but the poor girl shook her head, and I plainly perceived she had been cautioned.

"I am convinced, Mr. Reybridge, that Providence, who has graciously endowed us with fortitude to resist temptation, has also given us resolution to encounter dangers, and that it is as weak in us to despair of escaping from the latter, as to yield to the former. By an unaccountable effort of resolution in the perilous situation to which I was now exposed, I perhaps owe my safety, for I was no sooner left alone, than, instead of giving way to despair, I began to form the project of making my escape.

"Having doubly locked and bolted my door, I ran to the window, and, by the light of the moon, which shone at this time very bright, observed that I might, with great care, drop to a shrubbery below which led to the park, without materially hurting myself. All apprehensions of the future, vanished before the magnitude of my present danger, and I instantly opened the window. The distance from the ground might be about twelve feet; but this height did not deter me. I committed myself, therefore, to Providence, and getting, with some difficulty, out of the window, still holding with my hands, I jumped below. Fortunately, I fell among flowers and shrubs, by which means I received no bruises, though I was a little stunned by the fall. The moon still befriending me, I ran with my swiftest speed towards the avenue, which I knew led to the gate by which we had entered; but, just as I had

gained it, I saw, to my inexpressible terror, two or three men, making towards me. Not doubting but they were Sir Frederick's spies, I fell on my knees before them, and conjured them, by every obligation that was most sacred, not to betray me to their master, and offered a reward to them, to any amount they chose to name, if they would but assist me in escaping to P——n. To this, little was said in reply, but enough to assure me I had fallen among friends. In short, Mr. Reybridge, your faithful tars conveyed me to the post chaise, in the lane, whilst one of them, I think the good old sailor you called Grappling, went in search of you. The rest you know. To your courage and humanity I am indebted for the safety of my life and honour! an obligation which it is as impossible I can ever repay, as that I shall ever forget."

Here the fair Louisa concluded her story, and the last sentence was accom-

panied with a blush which might very reasonably have been attributed to gratitude solely, had our hero been four score years old, instead of one! Further this deponent sayeth not. Ralph had a thousand expressions of acknowledgment at his tongue's end, but the faulterer was not to be trusted. But, though our youth could not use his tongue, his eyes were not to be controlled; and it was, perhaps, a very fortunate circumstance for both parties, that the chaise stopped when it did at the turnpike, that ushered them into P——n.

Had Reybridge been really guilty of neglect and ingratitude towards this venerable tutor, he could not have been more agitated at the idea of meeting him. As the chaise drove through the village, every house he passed, every tree and field he saw, painfully reminded him of Stoke-hill, the happy days of his infancy, and the maternal tenderness of his

deceased benefactress. He, however, rallied his spirits as the chaise stopped at a neat inn, and having handed Miss Leybrook into a room, he left her, whilst she wrote the following lines to Mr. Denham:

"Rev. and dear Sir,

"I am arrived in safety, and am staying at the Star Inn. I did not order the chaise to the vicarage, for reasons I will explain when I see you here. Make haste, then, to your grateful and affectionate

"LOUISA LEYBROOK."

Friday.

The reunion of the tutor and his pupil, and a letter from Lord Ardendale.—Resolutions in consequence.—Mr. Denham's reply to the Earl.

In consequence of the note with which we concluded our last chapter, Mr. Denham soon made his appearance at the Star, and was introduced to Miss Leybrook alone, Ralph remaining in an adjoining room till his reverend tutor should be prepared to receive him.

The beautiful Louisa met the good old clergyman with the affection of a daughter, and having briefly stated the dangers from which she had been rescued by our hero, the old man first returned thanks to heaven for her preservation, then gazing on her animated

countenance for some minutes—" and what have you done," exclaimed he—" with the gallant youth who so nobly delivered you from this dangerous man! —I long to bless him for the great service he has rendered to innocence and virtue. —" I think, sir," replied Louisa faltering, " he would prefer *your* friendship, to any other reward that could be offered him."—" My friendship, my dear young lady," replied Mr. Denham.—" Alas! what advantage could he derive from the friendship of an obscure old man like me?"—" And yet, my dear Sir," rejoined Miss Leybrook, " there *was* a time when it would have been of the greatest advantage to him."—" You astonish me, my dear Louisa!" answered Mr. Denham.—Who *is* this person? were not the unhappy Reybridge abroad, I should think by your manner,———good God! you blush and tremble!——Is it possible that I can be right in my conjecture?"—" Indeed, Sir," faltered the

young lady, "you are."—"Ralph Reybridge returned?" rejoined the old man sinking into a chair.—"Yes!" exclaimed our hero, suddenly bursting into the room, and throwing himself at the feet of his venerable friend; "Ralph Reybridge is returned, returned to justify himself, in the opinion of his beloved tutor, and receive from his hands the reward of all his afflictions, his blessing and forgiveness."

The old clergyman, affected as he was by this unexpected address, presently recollected himself, and regarding our prostrate hero with a look of calm, but steady severity, "I must beg, Sir," said he, "that you will quit that posture, for though you may have forgotten, I have not, that it is one which ought to be dedicated to God alone."—Ralph instantly arose, and the old man continued.—"The errors, and even vicious irregularities of youth, may be entitled to pardon, for few can withstand the

prevalence of bad example, but the heart that can harbour, for a moment, the crime of ingratitude, must be radically depraved.—Young man, I wish you well, but we must meet no more!"—"Ah! my friend, my father!"—exclaimed Ralph, seizing his tutor's hand, "say not so—cast me not from you; for, though guilty indeed I am, forgetful though I confess I have been of your precepts, which I once shamefully sacrificed at the shrine of folly, intemperance and dissipation, yet of ingratitude, thank heaven! I am innocent.—Indeed, my venerable friend, we have both been abused; and as this is the first opportunity I have had of pleading my own cause, condemn me not unheard."—"Truth, sir," replied Mr. Denham, "requires little explanation.—The dissipation and intemperance you confess to have been guilty of, the circumstances of your situation induced me to forgive before you could, or did, solicit my for-

giveness; but what followed? I repeatedly wrote to you, and my letters were never answered; I heard of your continuing in a course of vice, long subsequent to these neglected letters, yet still I could not bring myself to believe you had received them, or that you could be so lost to all sense of shame, so infatuated by your new connections, as to treat, with such contemptuous ingratitude the friend who had long regarded you as the child of his adoption, whose mind he had cultivated, and whose heart he had endeavoured to purify. Determined, however, to be convinced beyond dispute, I employed a friend, in whose honor I knew I could confide, to make enquiry on the spot; that enquiry condemned you. With his own eyes, he saw every admonitory epistle I had sent lying open, and scattered in fragments about your room at Shrewsbury, and with his own hands did he convey these fragments to me. There were one or

two corroborative circumstances mentioned by Mr. Shepperton at the time, which left in my mind no doubt of your guilt."

"Still do I say, dear Sir," interrupted Reybridge, "that you have been grossly, villanously imposed upon! and the treacherous author of the proceeding which you have now unfolded, and which I shudder to think upon, the great Protector of innocence will one day signally punish!—Oh! Mr. Denham, no wonder you renounced me!—Had I been guilty of the crimes you have imputed to me, with what confidence could I have preferred a prayer even to heaven!—On what pretence could I now insult you, my venerable tutor, with my presence?"—Here the tear of mingled grief and indignation rolled down our hero's cheek; and the old man did not perceive it unmoved: —desiring him therefore in a milder accent, to proceed in his explanation,

Ralph, in language that innocence could alone have dictated, not only disowned having received the letters in question, but delivered into the trembling hands of the old clergyman, copies of all the letters he had written to him, whilst groaning under the weight of his displeasure.

Tocorroborate this testimony, he produced some memoranda which had been given him by lieutenant Fitzallen in his own hand-writing, and previously to their separation; containing, among other particulars, some strong comments on the subtle character of Valpine, some observations on our hero's general conduct, and the facts connected therewith, by which it seemed evident that all the letters must have been intercepted.

He then produced the epistle he had received from Valpine, when in India, and major Penrose's pencil remarks upon different passages therein, by which it would appear that this man was but an engine in the hands of some higher

power. Mr. Denham was thunder-struck by what he now saw and heard. The innocence of Reybridge could no longer be doubted, but the criminality of Valpine it seemed impossible to detect. He had been, at the same time, the benefactor and the perfidious enemy of our hero, and this was inconsistency which seemed to defy solution. Yet major Penrose's remarks on the whole of Reybridge's story, offered an explanation of every difficulty, and the old clergyman having again perused them attentively, seemed strongly inclined to be of the same opinion.

"My dear child," cried he, after a long pause, and tenderly embracing our hero, "the ordinances of the Almighty are beyond our comprehension; but universal justice and benevolence must ever attend them, in whatever light they may appear to our imperfect comprehensions. Before I can finally determine on what course to pursue in regard to

this man of mystery and darkness, I must hear the whole of your story. In the mean time, let this embrace convince you that I am perfectly satisfied of your innocence, and once more receive you as the child of my adoption and love."

A description of Ralph's transports to find himself once more possessed of his tutor's friendship, I candidly confess I am unequal to;—even the fair Louisa paid, to this tender reconciliation, the tribute of a tear that the enraptured Reybridge would not have bartered for the richest gem in the mines of Golconda.

The happy trio now repaired to the rectory, which, though a much larger building, and, in every respect more commodious than the Parsonage-house at Stoke, again reminded our hero of the blissful days of his infancy, when he was ignorant of the villany of mankind, and had not calculated upon the misery of dependence, and the anxieties that await-

ed his destitute condition; ignorant from whom he sprang, or what country gave him birth!—Dinner being over, our hero was desired to relate every particular of his story from the hour of his first residence under the roof of the Valpines, to the present time.

"And, my dear Ralph," said the rector, "as I am finally persuaded you will not attempt to gloss over the errors of your conduct during the recital, so I must insist upon it, you do not, from any motives of false delicacy, hurry over or omit any circumstances that may do you credit."—"I shall obey you, sir," replied Ralph, "though be assured, my too indulgent benefactor, that my miserable follies at Shrewsbury will be but feebly expiated by the mere negative merit of my conduct since:—To have ever forgotten the noble lessons you took so much pains to inculcate in my wayward mind, shows such a want of firmness, such an ignorance of the true value

and consequence of virtue, that I can scarcely forgive myself for the trespass. Oh! my tutor, still are you right. I *have* been ungrateful in the strongest sense of the word, for I forgot *you* when I forgot your instructions, and still ought to be banished from your protecting arms!"

Mr. Denham was about to reply, when a man entered, and delivered to him a letter brought by a servant of lord Ardendale's on horseback; the contents of which were as follows:

"TO THE REV. CHARLES DENHAM.

"My dear friend,

"I have been in a state of so much uneasiness and anxiety for the last twelve hours, that I know not what may be the consequence to my health.

"On the receipt of this, for heaven's sake take measures to prevent a calamity that would embitter my future moments,

and render the decline of life as wretched as was the dawn.

"I will not attempt to justify my son's conduct towards Miss Leybrook: I am even inclined to think it must have been worse than it was represented to me, to have compelled her away in so sudden a manner, and without a single man-servant to protect her on her journey. I had, however, comforted myself with the assurance of her being with you, and that a little time for reflection would induce her to forget and forgive Westmere's certainly unjustifiable behaviour; when a chaise drove up to the door, from which descended Louisa's own maid, in a condition of mind that filled me with the most terrible apprehensions for the safety of her young lady. From her we were told, that in consequence of an accident which had detained the chaise on the road, her young mistress had been intercepted in her journey, by a rake of fashion, a Sir

Frederick Lorimer, who, under pretence of showing attention to *my* ward, had, contrary to every rule of propriety, and even decency, obliged her to accompany him to his house, known by the name of Coverley-lodge; and, at which place, it is also known, that this libertine keeps a woman of infamous character!

"How the poor maid escaped, has not yet come exactly to my knowledge, but I fancy it was owing to her having interceded with one of the servants, who happened to be acquainted with her.

"As it was impossible to keep this intelligence from Westmere, so was it equally impracticable to restrain the impetuosity of his indignation; and, before I could lay my positive commands upon him, not to have any interview with Sir Frederick Lorimer, till I myself had called upon that gentleman for an explanation, he was gone past recal, and I am, at this moment,

under the most fearful apprehensions about him. Should he and the baronet meet, fatal consequences must ensue; for, however inexcusable his conduct towards his fair cousin might have been, and however merited his present sufferings, on account of her displeasure, he has the tenderest regard for her happiness and honor, and is, perhaps, at this moment, sacrificing his life in defence of both.

"What this worthless man's designs may be, in detaining Miss Leybrook, I cannot conceive, unless it be to frighten her into a compliance to marry him; for I understand his fortune, though not long ago a noble one, has been squandered away in riot and dissipation. Louisa is, however, above a compulsion of this nature, and Sir Frederick, for his own sake, finding his case desperate, will allow her to pursue her journey to P——n. I cannot, for an instant, suppose he will presume to address her in

the language of a libertine. Pray heaven she may have reached the rectory before Westmere's arrival; then matters may still be accommodated without bloodshed.

"Oh! my dearest friend! What shall I say to you to induce you to plead my son's cause once more to Louisa? Believe me, he appears to be thoroughly ashamed of himself, and indeed I cannot doubt the sincerity of his repentance, for, on my first proposing to write to you, anterior to the intelligence of this, Sir Frederick Lorimer's insolent proceeding, he begged I would not. 'Miss Leybrook,' said he, 'has already suffered too much from my importunities, and I am resolved to molest her no more. I will wait, with due submission, till the period of her minority be past, according to the kind and just proposal I so ungratefully, petulently, and stupidly rejected; if then, she should be

inclined to extend her forgiveness, my dear father, and much may be expected from the suavity of her disposition, I shall be blessed indeed!'—These were his words, my dear Mr. Denham, and he is, at this moment, ignorant that I write.

"An express is this moment arrived from my son.—A rencounter *has* taken place between him and the baronet, fortunately without an accident; Sir Frederick having, after the first exchange of shot, made the most ample apology; but Miss Leybrook had been previously rescued in a most extraordinary manner, the preceding evening. What can this mean? Surely she is with you. Who else could have afforded her this timely assistance? I send this by my own servant, post; adieu!—For heaven's sake lose no time in relieving my anxieties about my dear girl. Those

for my son are, by the blessing of Providence, now removed.

Your affectionate friend,

"ARDENDALE."

Grosvenor-square,
Thursday night, 8th April, 17—.

Mr. Denham having read this letter twice over, ordered the earl's servant to be called, and asked how soon he should be sufficiently refreshed to pursue his journey back to town. "I was commanded, Sir," replied the messenger, "to waste as little time as possible, and, as I am to be relieved on the road, shall be ready to set out again in an hour, if your reverence pleases."—The old clergyman immediately gave orders that he should be properly taken care of; then retiring to his study, replied to his noble friend in the following terms:

"TO THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF ARDENDALE.

"My lord,

"Miss Leybrook *was* rescued from her degrading and dangerous situation, in an 'extraordinary manner.' She owes her safety, my lord, to a young man whom I have long unjustly deprived of the protection I once promised him, through the artifices of some secret enemy. She is safe with me, and well.

"The case of my much injured pupil, Ralph Reybridge, is, my lord, of so uncommon a nature, that, old as I am, and but ill prepared as I feel to encounter the close and skilful machinations of long practised duplicity, I am determined, once more, to visit a metropolis I never thought to have seen again. I will even venture, on this occasion, to claim from your lordship what you once so generously promised, your assistance

and advice in the cause of a youth who was never, a few irregularities excepted into which bad example led him, unworthy of both, and I make this claim with an assurance, that when you shall have heard all the particulars of the dark story we have to tell, and duly weighed the observations thereon, by two gentlemen who thought it worth while to commit them to paper, you will grant him such protection as he may deem it requisite to request from you. I shall bring him with me to town. I will even, if you permit me, introduce him to your lordship, and to lord Westmere. Even Mr. Valpine must condescend to recognize him, though he has returned from India in direct opposition to his advice, and greatly contrary, I fancy, to his expectations and wishes.

"Having thus, my lord, apprized you of my intentions, it is for your lordship to determine whether you will choose to

assist me in the investigation of truths so deeply interesting to Mr. Reybridge; and, in which, I confess I shall have occasion to call for explanations from a gentleman who has lately contrived to stand very high in your lordship's opinion. I, however, have that firm reliance on your lordship's love of justice, that I am almost confident this assistance will be joyfully rendered me. Should it be otherwise, as I do not purpose setting out till Monday morning, you will have full time to decline the introduction I propose.

"As I think I may depend upon the assurances of lord Westmere in regard to Miss Leybrook; but, at all events, upon your lordship's protecting her from further molestation on the subject of marriage, till she may be willing herself to admit the discussion, I shall persuade her to return with me to London, and you may rely also upon my utmost endeavours to induce her to forget her re-

sentment against lord Westmere, in consequence of what he said to your lordship; and to consent, on certain stipulations, when she comes of age, to admit his addresses once more.

I remain,
My lord,
Your lordship's sincere
and grateful servant,
"CHARLES DENHAM."

P——n, 10th April, 17—

The good man having finished his letter, descended with it to his young friends, and read to them its contents.

Our hero's emotions, on that part of it which respected himself, were not to be suppressed; he flung himself on the bosom of his revered benefactor, and it was some minutes before the worthy rector could calm the perturbation of his grateful heart. Louisa, whose attention had been interested, and whose heart had been softened by the events of

the day, made no objection to accompanying her venerable protector to town, but to the thoughts of suffering, at any time, the renewed addresses of Westmere, she seemed to feel greater repugnance than ever, though she admitted what he had said to his father to be considerate, and even generous. The earl's servant being now dismissed, and the little party again settled round the rector's fire, Ralph began, without further preparation, his eventful story, relating it, as Mr. Denham requested him, without the slightest reserve, or the omission of a single circumstance that could either sink or raise him in the esteem of his auditors. Mr. Denham was variously affected and astonished in the course of the narrative, and the blooming cheeks of Louisa were frequently bedewed with tears; but, as our hero had very prudently kept his eyes fixed on the no less pleasing, though more placid features of his tutor, during his recital, he es-

of tenderness would inevitably have thrown him into. Having concluded, the old rector rose from his seat, and, again affectionately embracing his pupil, "I thank you," cried he, "my dear good lad, for as such I am proud to acknowledge you, and blessed be the Father of all good, that has allowed me once more to encircle in my arms the still guileless, amiable child of my first and best affections. If any thing had been wanting, Ralph, to convince me of the vile falsities that have been so long operating to your prejudice, it would have been your own relation of your own adventures."

In this opinion Miss Leybrook looked her full acquiescence, and the tea-things being brought, she, at the old man's request, did the duties of this comfortable recreation, but she was with our hero in the sea, and poor Sefton in the *jungle*, the whole time.

The next day passed without any

thing material occurring; yet, notwithstanding the caution of our hero, it was impossible to blind the eyes of his tutor to the unfortunate attachment he had formed. On Sunday, therefore, he contrived that Louisa should go to church under the guidance of an elderly lady of his acquaintance, whilst Ralph was destined to a pew by himself. On the same evening, when Miss Leybrook had retired to her chamber, the good man thus addressed him. "My dear Ralph, it is with more pain than surprise, I observe you have not been able to contemplate, unmoved, the various attractions of the charming young woman who has just left us,—but as you know the peculiar delicacy of her present situation, I need not caution you against the indulgence of a rising passion that can only end in the bitterest disappointment to your present hopes and future expectations. I have no doubt of lord Ardendale's zealous exertions in your fa-

vour, but his son is of an impetuous and suspicious temper, and will, I fear, look with a jealous eye upon a youth of your appearance and qualifications, notwithstanding the wide disparity of your ranks and pretensions in life. Miss Leybrook has a strong and feeling mind, with a heart vulnerable to the softest impressions, for *her* sake, therefore, as well as your own, you will be particularly guarded in your conduct, nor suffer a word to escape you that may express a warmer sentiment than respect. I have, I believe, frequently promised that I would impart to you the history of lord Ardendale, and relate those melancholy events of his life that first brought us acquainted, whilst I was the rector of Stoke.

"As you will shortly, I hope, be introduced to him, I will no longer keep this history from you, as it will open your heart to respect and love a man who has suffered greatly under domestic ca-

lamity, but who has been saved to his friends and his country by that sacred influence, which religion must ever pour upon a well disposed mind.

"Attend then, my dear boy, and when you have heard the tale of his early sorrows and misfortunes, you will no longer wonder at my feeling so anxious that the close of his life should have all its comforts."—Ralph listened with the profoundest attention, and the rector began in the following words.

CHAP. VI.

In which Mr. Denham commences the history of the Earl of Ardendale.

Mr. Denham began his story as follows :

" In the ages of feudal barbarity, nothing was more common than differences and contentions among the neighbouring nobility; but they were generally decided at once by the point of the sword, and rarely thought of afterwards. The misunderstandings of the present day are not so easily cancelled, and frequently degenerate into the most inveterate and permanent hatred. It is not material to the present history, to trace back the origin of those disputes, which for many years back have

divided the noble houses of Ardendale and Carringsfort; suffice it to observe, that the first impression which the father of the present earl was most anxious to stamp upon his son's mind, when he was capable of reasoning, was the enmity it became his *duty* to bear, on every occasion, towards the marquis of Carringsfort and his family.

"On my first acquaintance with the old earl, at the university, I admired the depth of his understanding, the quickness of his penetration, and a general sense of rectitude that appeared to govern his actions and conversation; he likewise professed a just regard for morality, and his judgment was so generally correct, that he would have been the last man I should have suspected of adopting prejudices so derogatory to the principles of a good philosopher, and a good christian. But this is one proof, among a thousand, of the fallibility of our natures; and how

far distant we sometimes are from the goal of perfection, at the very time we fancy ourselves nearly approaching it.

"On succeeding to his title and estates, he presented me, in consideration of our former intimacy, with the small living of Stoke, and his marriage with lady Louisa Leybrook followed soon after. The present earl was born in the second year of this union, and, like other heirs of great families, received rather an ornamental, than a useful education. With a mind, however, naturally well disposed, he had sense enough to perceive and despise flattery; and, as he was fond of reading and observation, he had few opportunities of imbibing either the false pride of his father, or the extravagant propensities of the countess.

"Attached, however, equally to both these beloved parents, his chief study was to prevent their wishes, and, although it was always mortifying to him

to hear the earl's lectures on the *propriety* of maintaining the dignity of one house, by nourishing animosity towards another, and equally unpleasant to be consulted by his mother on her plans of dissipation, yet he never ventured to oppose, for fear of offending them. So sincerely, indeed, did he love them, that he would sometimes acquiesce in sentiments his heart could not wholly approve, that he might reap the satisfaction of contributing to their happiness.

"This excellent young man was nineteen years old, when his father proposed that he should make the tour of Europe; and the Iversfield estate, in Ireland, descending to the earl about the same time, by the sudden death of his aunt, lady Iversfield, it was determined that lord Westmere should previously pay a visit to this acquisition of property, for the purpose of ascertaining what repairs might be wanting to the

old mansion, and making such new arrangements on the estate in general, as he might judge requisite.

"Lord Westmere inherited all the good qualities of his father, without his frailties; my patron's marriage had, indeed, completely estranged him from his former rational pursuits, and instead of resisting, he had fatally acquiesced in all that profusion and dissipation which brought the countess to an untimely grave. Though the son saw and pitied the weakness of his parents, his respect for them checked every observation which he thought might be construed by them into impertinence;—especially by his mother, whose haughty and overbearing spirit could ill brook contradiction on any topic; still less on the theme of her favourite pleasures.

"But though lord Westmere forbore to remonstrate, he could, on no occasion, be induced to encourage this levity of temper in the countess; hence

was it with the less regret that she saw him take his departure from Rothwell Castle. The earl was more deeply affected. In the society and conversation of this amiable son, he had, in spite of his fondness for his lady, and his unconditional submission to her caprices, experienced his only moments of true delight; and he saw, not till it was too late, that he had not fairly estimated the value of such a companion, or considered that his loss would be irreparable. A renunciation of the scheme was now, however, impracticable. Westmere, ardent, aspiring, with quick sensibility, and anxious to become conversant in men and manners, had already anticipated the advantages he should receive from a continental tour, and could not endure the thoughts of a disappointment. The earl, therefore, gave way; and, though our youth quitted not the castle from which he was so long to be absent, without a pang, yet his concern

was quickly dissipated by the variety of pleasing reflections that accompanied him on his journey.

"Lord Ardendale had not so successfully infused that rancorous spirit of prejudice against the descendants of the Carringsfort family into the breast of his own son, as his late father had instilled it into him. The noble nature of the young lord revolted at so unreasonable, and indeed so culpable a constraint; and, as he was now going to Ireland, and as the marquis's estates, though not contiguous, were at no very great distance from Iversfield, he determined, if possible, to see this nobleman, and endeavour to effect a reconciliation. Nay, he even went so far as to write to his father on the subject, and proposed, that if a fair opportunity should offer of putting an end to so long and unprofitable a contention, that it should not be neglected, and he promised to make use of it without descending to the slightest

submission. He urged, moreover, that an oblivion of wrongs which the present parties knew little of, and which false pride or malice might from the beginning, have exaggerated, could only redound to the credit of both families. To this benevolent proposition, he received, from the infatuated earl, an intemperate and decisive negative, accompanied by a prohibition that he should, on no pretence whatever, hold any direct or indirect communication with the marquis of Carringsfort or any part of his family on pain of his irrevocable displeasure. Westmere, whilst he lamented this blind submission to hereditary prejudices, was nevertheless determined, so far as it was in his power, to obey this solemn command. He had the satisfaction of reflecting that he had declared his sentiments on the subject, and still ventured to indulge a hope that, in process of time, he should have an opportunity of

renewing his application with better success.

"As the sweetness of his disposition had endeared the heir of Ardendale from his infancy to all ranks and descriptions of people, he was welcomed with every demonstration of joy, by the old domestics of Iversfield. Little, however, appeared necessary to be done on the estate, except some slight repairs of the antique mansion. The household establishment was reported by Mr. Ewstace the steward, unexceptionable:—and the tenants sober, regular, and religious. His stay in Ireland would have been consequently very short, but for an incident that was the foundation of a train of misfortunes which nearly bowed him to an early grave, and which still continues to throw a gloom over his most tranquil moments.

"The morning prior to his return to England, from whence it was his intention to have departed immediately for

Paris, he received a card of invitation couched in terms of great politeness, from Sir Charles Malaney, a young baronet of fashion and fortune, whose estate was contiguous to Iversfield, requesting his company to a ball and supper at which many families from Dublin, and the neighbouring nobility and gentry were to be present. Though anxious to be gone and by no means disposed to partake in such amusements, he could not, consistently with politeness, refuse this invitation. Sir Charles had been frequently at lady Ardendale's parties in London, and was once or twice at Rothwell Castle, but as he was a youth of loose principles and frivolous conversation, Westmere had made no advances towards cultivating his acquaintance, though he was professedly a favourite with the countess. On the present occasion, however, he thought civility at least was due to him, and he attended the fête accordingly.

"The fashionable Sir Charles received him with great cordiality, but was soon called to attend to other visitors, and Westmere was left, agreeably to his wishes, alone. His person and address were, however, too striking to elude enquiry, but, as he declined dancing, he had an early opportunity of escaping from an observation, which in a few minutes became general, and consequently embarrassing.

"In turning the corner of a room wherein refreshments were preparing, and which led to a beautiful parterre, he observed a very interesting figure of a young lady sitting in a pensive posture, and apparently occupied by far different reflections from those of the dancers within. Curiosity was not a predominant feature in the character of lord Westmere, yet it was more likely to attract him in the garb of sorrow, than in the garish colours of festivity and merriment; and, on the present

occasion, he could not resist the temptation of approaching, and speaking to the solitary stranger.

"But, if he had been struck with the figure of this young lady, what were his sensations on beholding features, which to exquisite loveliness joined the most animating expression. Her eyes were suffused with tears, yet she endeavoured to conceal her emotion on the approach of lord Westmere, and would have withdrawn, had not his lordship, in a manner at once the most respectful and consoling, petitioned her to keep her seat.

"I will not detain you, my dear boy, by entering into the particulars of the conversation that followed. Suffice it to say, that the suavity of his lordship's manner, and the unaffected interest it was obvious he took in her distress, induced Miss St. Aubyn, the name of the lady, to reveal some important particulars of her story. You may

guess the feelings of this amiable young man, when she gave him to understand that she was the niece of the present Marquis of Carringsfort, and that the marquis himself, and his two daughters, the lady Lawreys, were then in the ball-room!—Her further account was simple and affecting. By the untimely death of Colonel St. Aubyn her only parent, she had been thrown, an orphan, on the protection of his brother, lord Carringsfort; but his lordship, born to consider riches and pedigree the only distinctions of life, and considering poverty, whether the result of misfortune or imprudence, equally a degradation, had received her with a cold indifference, which, as her beauty expanded, and her superior merits and accomplishments attracted the general admiration from the lady Lawreys, his own daughters, soon settled into hate; and nothing but the opprobrium which he was apprehensive might follow such

conduct, had prevented him from withdrawing from her his protection altogether. Compelled, therefore, to keep up some appearance of regard to the daughter of an only brother, she was now suffered to visit with the lady Lawreys, but more in the quality of their dependant, than their cousin. In this humiliating situation, she had long endured, with exemplary patience, the malice and ill-humours of these unfeeling sprigs of fashion, and was obliged, on occasions when she was desired to appear in public with them, to retire, as soon as possible, to some unfrequented spot, that she might escape the sneers and affected commiseration of the surrounding circle.

"Such was the substance of Miss St. Aubyn's relation, every word of which went to Westmere's heart. The confidence thus reposed in him by a lovely young woman, rendered still more charming in his eyes by her misfortunes,

her modest and unaffected manners, the plaintive eloquence of her voice, all contributed to fascinate, and fix him; and, in the first transports of his mingled esteem, and indignation, as she concluded her story, he vowed to redress her grievances at the hazard of his life. The projected reconciliation with such a man as the marquis, was now completely abandoned, and he only thought of the means of extricating the beautiful Miss St. Aubyn from her present distressing situation under his lordship's roof. But lord Westmere did not consider, that, though an object of persecution she was still closely *related* to this marquis of Carringsfort, and that in vindicating *her* cause, he was still espousing the interests of a part of his family. The unbefriended condition of this prudent young lady, prevented her from placing too implicit a confidence in Westmere's first wild declarations, though she had heard him with a

warmer interest than mere respect requires, and had been struck by the noble frankness of his manner and expressions; she ventured not however to indulge a hope, that, from so short an acquaintance, the protection his lordship might be ultimately induced to offer her, would be such as she might honourably expect.

"His lordship in the mean time returned to Iversfield in a state of perturbation and anxiety till then entirely new to him. The image of this sweet girl was continually before him, and he too incautiously yielded to those tender sensations, which, for the first time, took possession of his heart. To these, however, succeeded more rational considerations. He saw the difficulty and danger that would attend any communication with the haughty marquis on the subject of his niece's grievances, nor did it escape him that such an interference might be made a powerful weapon of

calumny in the hands of her enemies. Shrinking, therefore, from the task he had undertaken, and finally reflecting that his conduct in the affair might, however excusable and even commendable, greatly incense his father, he determined to think no more of the matter, and to quit Ireland without loss of time.

"In pursuance of this resolution, he set off the following morning for Dublin; but it was not till after two or three exertions to continue in this course, he unexpectedly discovered that to fly from Miss St. Aubyn and her misfortunes was impossible. He was, indeed, alarmed to find that a deeper and more dangerous impression had been made upon his heart than the most zealous friendship and compassion had the power to stamp; in short, that his future happiness depended on a union which neither prudence, interest, or duty could sanction.

"His fair mistress was not only des-

titute of friends and fortune, but had been declared by her unworthy uncle, as sprung from a degenerated branch of his family, and not entitled to the respect it claimed. Was it, therefore, possible that his indignant father would condescend to acknowledge, as his daughter, the *cast-off* niece of his avowed enemy? Could he bear to think that such a conduct on his part, would, in the eyes of lord Carringsfort, have the appearance of a base concession, and that the marquis would regard it only with contemptuous exultation? Marriage, therefore, was impossible. Yet his noble heart revolted at the idea of seduction, and so truly was it the seat of honour, that I do not think, with all these impediments to a lawful connexion, he would have taken advantage of the most yielding weakness in his favor.

"Lord Carringsfort's residence at this time was at Oakbridge, about ten miles from Iversfield. Westmere, still mind-

ful of his father's prohibition, shuddered at the idea of introducing himself in his real character, yet it was absolutely necessary he should be announced to the family before he could see Miss St. Aubyn; for, so closely was she observed, and so constantly was she in requisition, from the capricious wants of her cousins, that a clandestine interview would have been attended with almost certain detection. Unable, therefore, to conquer for the present his unfortunate passion, which, however, he still flattered himself he should be able ultimately to subdue, he adopted a feigned name, and contrived, with some difficulty, to get introduced at Oakbridge as a distant relation of the late Mr. St. Aubyn, and was presented by the marquis to his niece, as Mr. Clitheroe. Fortunately the Miss Lawreys were absent when the introduction took place, or the confusion of their cousin, during

this ceremony, might not have passed unobserved.

"It was some time before lord Westmore found an opportunity of explaining to this amiable girl, the motive which obliged him to assume a name to which he had not the slightest pretensions; but his explanation was far from being satisfactory to her. A son thus flying in the face of a father, however prejudiced, appeared to her in so culpable a light, that she would not, for a long time be induced to listen to those ardent professions of regard which lord Westmere had vainly endeavoured to withhold, but which were now abundantly poured forth at every visit. Yet she could not entirely command a heart, which, from almost the first moment, had beat for him alone: nor could she, in his society, conceal the pleasure it gave her, or confine her sentiments to that cold medium which bespeaks neither friendship

nor love. He, indeed, had soon been convinced of her preference, and, after a few desperate struggles, determined, at all hazards, to make her his wife.

"In his letters to his father, who began to wonder at his long stay at Iversfield, he had never once given a hint of the real cause of his detention, but it now became necessary for him to decide whether he should or should not marry Miss St. Aubyn, without asking his father's and the countess's consent. On reflection, he thought it would be safer that the wedding should previously take place, and thus depend rather upon the strength of their affection for him, for forgiveness of an irremediable fault, than risk the loss of all his hopes by a reference which might subject him to the denunciation of a father's curse.

"Having introduced himself to the marquis as a man of small fortune, that selfish nobleman was glad of so good an opportunity of getting his poor niece

off his hands, and gave every encouragement to his addresses, accordingly. Miss St. Aubyn's reluctance, nevertheless, to unite her fate to the heir of a noble family in so clandestine a manner, was not to be surmounted :—disgrace and wretchedness could only be the consequences of such a union, and she continued a considerable time deaf to her lover's remonstrances, entreaties, and even tears.

"At length her resolution gave way to his constant and ardent solicitations, and she consented to be his wife.

"But, although lord Westmere had been obliged to carry on his courtship under an assumed name, every principle of honour and delicacy forbade that he should continue the deception at the altar; and his design was, having once obtained Miss St. Aubyn's consent, to have conveyed her immediately to England, and have had the ceremony performed privately in London. To this

arrangement, his fair mistress, who had an implicit confidence in his delicacy and integrity, made little objection; but it was unexpectedly opposed by lord Carringsfort, who was so well pleased with the match, that he condescended to intimate, that he would himself give away the bride in his own chapel. This was an honour to which the least objection would have looked very suspicious, especially as the marquis had lately been given to understand, in spite of the cautions of Westmere, that the heir of Ardendale was still a resident at Iversfield.

"Sir Charles Malaney, at the time he had sent his invitation to the young lord, did not advert to the impropriety of bringing together, on an occasion of festivity, persons he had reason to suppose were so inimical to each other. On the appearance, however, of lord Carringsfort and his daughters, the inadvertence he had been guilty of, im-

mediately struck him: for, though the parties were at the time unknown to one another, it was not possible they could have remained so long, had not Westmere so suddenly quitted the ball-room. After his lordship's conversation with Miss St. Aubyn, he went away; from which circumstance, the marquis, (though he was soon made acquainted by the officious babblers about him, that lord Ardendale's only son was then at the fête), was spared, as were his accomplished daughters, the mortification of seeing him.

"As lord Carringsfort's proposition was not, therefore, to be rejected, it was embraced, to prevent the possibility of subsequent suspicions, with much apparent gratitude, by the pretended Mr. Clitheroe, and a day was appointed for the celebration of the nuptials. In the mean time, Westmere projected a plan of escape from Oakbridge, which the most scrupulous delicacy, where there

was so much love and confidence, and so many difficulties to be surmounted, could not but approve. The plan was, that on the evening preceding the ceremony, a post-chaise should be in waiting, at a particular spot, to convey them to Iversfield, where a Roman Catholic, as well as a Protestant priest, for Miss St. Aubyn was a Papist, should be in waiting, with a proper license, to join their hands, agreeably to the respective forms of each persuasion.

"As this process was simple, it was easily and successfully effected. Their escape was made, without a suspicion having been excited, and the indissoluble knot was tied, with the omission of no one ceremony that could invalidate the marriage.

"Being thus put in possession of the woman he might be almost said to adore, lord Westmere saw the necessity of immediately rescuing her character from the imputations which would be

cast upon it, in consequence of her elopement. He accordingly wrote to lord Caringsfort in civil, and even in conciliating terms. He openly confessed the reasons that had made it impossible for him to act otherwise than he had done, at the same time expressing a hope, that the connection he had thus formed with his lordship's family, might be the means of effecting a reconciliation between their houses; an event which could only happily be completed by his sanction of the union in question.

"Had his lordship thus acted by either of the marquis's daughters, it is more than probable, that the irregularity of the proceeding would have been overlooked; but, the sudden exaltation of his *niece* to a rank, nothing inferior to the lady Lawreys, and that too effected by artifice! The conviction, moreover, that he himself had been made an instrument, to promote the views of an upstart branch of the house of Ar-

dendale! These were insults he could by no means brook, and his fury and indignation knew no bounds. How his revenge was gratified, I shall presently relate.

"In the interim, Westmere vainly waited in expectation of an answer to his letter, and was on the point of following it up by a personal application, when he received an unexpected visit from Mr. Etherington, the Protestant clergyman, who had married him. This gentleman, whom I have heard lord Ardendale mention with the greatest reverence, acquainted him that he had good reason to suspect the marquis of Carringsfort of having written an account of the marriage to his father, and in terms of such contempt and exultation, that it was highly necessary his own explanation of circumstances, should be no longer delayed. The rage of Westmere, at this intelligence, is not to be described. Notwithstanding his

lady's prayers and supplications, he rushed forth with the desperate determination of summoning the marquis to a dreadful reckoning, for his infamous and inhuman behaviour; but his lordship had taken good care to provide for the probable consequences of his malignity, by having departed the day before, with his family, to his seat on the borders of the lake of Killarney.

CHAP. VII.

In which Mr. Denham continues his history of the Earl of Ardendale.

"Nothing now remained to be done, but to hasten a full explanation to his father. Exasperated as he knew the earl would be at the first knowledge of the event, he relied on the former tenderness of an indulgent parent, for the speedy remission of the offence, and, elated by this hope, began his vindication without loss of time. He urged every possible reason that might palliate his own indiscretion, and soften his parent's resentment. He pathetically pleaded the ardour of his attachment, which he had vainly endeavoured to subdue, and finally expatiated on the

beauty, virtues, and accomplishments of his beloved Caroline, with all the generous and unaffected warmth of a strongly devoted heart.

"How much is it to be lamented, that this interesting justification had not been immediately forwarded to Rothwell Castle, and the address to lord Carringsfort suppressed. Had lord Westmere acted with his usual prudence, this would have been the case, since a moment's reflection must have convinced him that the sordid passions which rankled in the bosom of the marquis, would oppose the admission of any feeling that bore the most distant affinity to benevolence, and that such an appeal would only be converted to his prejudice.

"The letter being finished, a trusty servant was ordered to carry it, with the utmost expedition, to Rothwell Castle. Alas! the inflammatory epistle of Carringsfort, had already reached it; had

raised a tempest in the bosom of the rash and inconsiderate father, that death alone had power to appease. Westmere and his lovely bride were at breakfast, the seventh day after their marriage, when a special messenger from the earl arrived, and having put a letter into the hands of his young lord, remounted his horse, and was out of sight again, before the unfortunate youth could recover from the confusion into which this strange and ill-boding precipitation had thrown him. With trembling hesitation he opened the fatal paper. The contents were once, only, shown to me, but I shall never forget them. The writing was scarcely legible that unfolded to his view the following bitter renunciation.

'When I inform you that I have just 'received a *consolatory* epistle from the 'marquis of Carringsfort, on the event of 'your marriage with his niece, you will

'not be surprised that I forbid you, on 'pain of my irrevocable curse, ever more 'to approach, or even address me. You 'will meet no interruption where you 'are, but be cautious how you add in-'sult to disobedience and ingratitude!

'ARDENDALE.'

"This terrible scroll, written by the earl in the first tumults of his frantic rage, and under excruciating bodily pain from an attack of the gout, discovered to his afflicted son, for the first time, the dreadful irascibility of his father's temper. It was incredible to him, that a bosom could nourish two such opposite feelings, as violent affection, and violent hatred! That a parent, at the sudden instigation of anger, should be able to shake off, with such determined inflexibility, all those endearing ligaments, which, for so long a period, had bound him to his child! But lord Westmere had never, like his

father, profited by the lesson of hating upon principle, nor knew he how deeply the angry feelings take root in the breast, when they have once been suffered to brood there.

"To conceal the earl's letter from lady Westmere, was impossible; but this admirable woman, sensible of the necessity of suppressing the anguish it gave her, affected to bear the shock with tender resignation. His lordship saw these virtuous struggles, and they contributed more firmly to fix his love, and raise his admiration.

"The first week subsequently to the receipt of this dreadful epistle, the reflections of Westmere were acute. He had doubtless been guilty of violating the commands of his father, and severely did he reproach himself for not having, in the first instance, addressed him on the subject of his love. He would have run, 'tis true, great risks by the reference, but much might have been rea-

sonably expected from an eloquent appeal, when the happiness of a darling son was at stake. Yet, still he had been guilty of no mean, nor flagitious action. Neither had he disgraced his family by a base connexion; the more, therefore, he adverted to the punishment his father had thought proper to inflict upon him, the more he was convinced it was greatly inadequate to his offence.

"The tour to the continent was now entirely set aside. The hope, faint though it was, that his father might still relent, and recal him, determined him to respect the hint contained in the fatal letter he had received, and remain at Iversfield.

"Weeks and months, however, passed away without affording the slightest encouragement to his wishes; yet, excepting this disappointment, he enjoyed, in his delightful retirement, and in the converse of his beloved lady, a happiness incapable of addition.

"Towards the close of the first year of their marriage, two considerations determined Westmere to return with his wife to England, and to fix his residence even in the vicinity of Rothwell-castle. The first of these was, the generally reported extravagance and dissipated conduct of his mother, who was not only squandering away immense sums, to the serious injury of the earl's fortune, but to the still more serious injury of her own constitution and reputation. A late trip to the capital, had brought her acquainted with many *new* faces of fashion, but of a description too licentious to pass current in the opinion of the lynx-eyed public. The countess of Ardendale's routs in Grosvenor-square became, in consequence, the subject of newspaper inuendos, nor did her ladyship herself escape the ever ready shafts of envy and defamation. Infatuated, however, by the noise of folly, she had no attention to bestow on

the malevolent whispers that began to be buzzed about; the same exceptionable characters were invited to her parties, and even included in the annual invitations to the castle.

"Lord Ardendale, though long accustomed to yield to the solicitations of his lady, and to submit, without a murmur, to all her arrangements, could not continue to witness unmoved the innovations that were continually making in his household establishment, and the hourly accumulation of its expences; nor, is it to be wondered at, that, roused at length, to a review of the countess's extravagance, he should reflect with alarm, and even indignation, on her imprudent choice of friends and associates. Remonstrances, therefore, had began on one side, and reproaches followed on the other, and it was, in consequence of the continuation of these domestic feuds, that Westmere's hopes of a reconciliation revived, and that if

he resided nearer the castle, it might be the sooner effected. In these hours of dissatisfaction and mutual contention, it seemed impossible that the earl, and even his mother, should not, occasionally, deplore his loss, and wish for his mediating presence. But the second, and most important consideration, was, lady Westmere's pregnancy. From the insensibility of the countess, he could expect little; but the earl's heart he well knew to be vulnerable to the softest impressions, when not under the dominion of that vindictive spirit which had now so long possessed it. His infant's tender plea he still hoped would prove irresistible, and his child had not been forbidden the sight of its grandfather.

"About six miles from Rothwell-castle, resided a physician of great professional ability, and not less distinguished for the goodness of his heart, and elegance of his manners. Dr. Comp-

ton, though he had long retired from public practice, was ever happy to afford, in cases of emergency, his advice and assistance, especially to his poorer neighbours, who could ill afford to pay for medical aid. Lord and lady Ardendale had never been upon any other than speaking terms with the worthy doctor and his wife; not that the earl had any objection to, and would have been pleased to have cultivated the friendship of the husband, but the sober pursuits of Mrs. Compton, were ill-calculated to attract the attention of the flighty and fickle countess.

"Westmere, who, without his father's indolence and infatuation, or his mother's levity and thoughtlessness, had seen and become early attached to those excellent people, improving every opportunity of gaining their friendship, now imparted to them the particulars of his unfortunate story, representing his

lady's critical situation, and acquainting them with his determination of bringing her, in a very short time, to England.

"There were a few delicate touches in this letter, not to be misunderstood by a man like Dr. Compton. He not only entered at once into the various motives that had induced his lordship to quit his retirement at Iversfield, but also saw there would be numberless little difficulties attending it, if lady Westmere had only her servants to wait upon her on her arrival in London. To the friendly communications, therefore, of his young friend, the good man returned the kindest reply, inviting both him and his lady to his own little villa, at Roxley, till his wishes should be finally completed, at least, till every thing had been tried to render them complete. In this invitation, he was most cordially joined by Mrs. Compton, nor was it without tears of gratitude, that lord and lady Westmere received, and per-

used this testimony of disinterested friendship. To his lordship, indeed, it was doubly welcome, on account of the advantages his beloved Caroline would reap from the attendance of the doctor, in his professional capacity, and during a crisis so interesting to them both.

"A few weeks preparatory to their departure, Mr. Etherington, the worthy divine I have before mentioned, had been prevailed upon to make one of the family at Iversfield, and, on their quitting it, was left in possession of the house, and the management of the estate, till the result of their journey to England could be ascertained.

"Their separation from this good man was solemn and affecting. He seemed, indeed, to have anticipated the fate of lady Westmere, for his last blessing was accompanied by an emotion which seemed to imply that they should *never meet again*.

"I am now arrived, my dear Ralph,

at that part of my story where I am to introduce myself. I have often told you that the late earl of Ardendale was my first friend and patron, and that it was entirely owing to his blind and unqualified attachment to a capricious woman, that he ceased to remember me. Yet had not I forgotten him, nor his bounty, which had made me independent and happy, and the fatal day on which Providence brought me acquainted with his son, was ushered in by a recollection of that generous bounty towards me.

"On this eventful day, (Sunday) I had promised to preach for a brother clergyman, the curate of Newton; and I set out, as was my custom on these occasions, early in the morning, that I might enjoy its healthful breezes. I dined, agreeably to a general invitation, whenever I officiated for my friend, with Mr. Forrester the county member, and having finished the afternoon's ser-

vice rather earlier than usual, the serenity of the evening tempted me to take a little circuitous ramble, on my return to Stoke; and to explore a bye-road which I had heard praised for leading to some of the most romantic spots about the country.

"Newton Vale Cottage I had also heard of; but I then knew the inhabitants, Mr. and Mrs. Rushden, only by name, the scantiness of their income making it necessary that they should live secluded.

"I had indulged myself so long in those pleasing reveries which contemplative men, like myself, are never more apt to fall into than when reviewing the glories of the creation, that I became fearful the evening would close in upon me before I could gain the rectory, a circumstance which I well knew would give the alarm to my faithful servant Hannah. I was preparing, therefore, to double my speed; when I was inex-

pressibly shocked by a piercing scream! and turning my face to the left, whence the shriek had proceeded, I caught a view of the cottage, which I knew from its situation to be Rushden's, and saw him and his wife, as I afterwards understood, supporting a young lady towards it, who appeared to have been dangerously hurt by some accident.

"My own concerns were immediately forgotten, I struck out of the road, and as I drew nearer, beheld a very elegant carriage on the ground almost shattered to pieces by the violence of an overthrow. An elegant young man at the same moment ran hastily by me, bearing so strong a resemblance to my former illustrious friend when I had first known him at Oxford, that it absolutely startled me; at the same instant a servant rode past me with a fury that made me rightly conjecture he was posting to Shrewsbury for medical assistance. This circumstance fortunately

reminded me that *my* assistance might also possibly be required; and recollecting at the same time, that it was my *duty*, at any rate, to be in readiness to administer it, you will easily conceive, my dear Ralph, that no consideration of self, however pressing, had power to deter me therefrom.

"Approaching, therefore, the cottage, I made myself known to Mr. Rushden, informed him that as it appeared evident the lady's life was in some danger, it was my wish to tarry in his house till the arrival of the physician; who would be able to ascertain whether or not it was great, and whether the consolation of religion, under so dreadful a presumption, might not be thought acceptable. Rushden very much approved of my intention, and giving my horse to the care of a servant, I walked into a little back parlour which he used to call his own room, where I waited the arrival and report of

the physician Dr. Monford, the gentleman who attended your benefactress, Mrs. Reybridge, in her last moments.

"He came;—and the unhappy lady was prematurely delivered of the present lord Westmere. Her life, however, appeared to the good doctor to hang by a very slender thread, and reluctantly was he obliged to declare that he had little hopes of restoring her to her distracted husband!—It was soon after this declaration that lord Westmere, for it was him, indeed, whom I had before seen, rushed into the parlour where I was. I will not attempt to describe, indeed it is always painful to me to recollect any of the scenes of that dreadful night, the despair visible in every feature of his death-like countenance. I started back with horror, and the name of *Ardendale* involuntarily escaped me. He approached, and wringing my hand,—'Mr. Denham,' said he in a trembling voice, 'is it then possible

I see before me that excellent friend whom my inhuman father has so long cast from his bosom? Often,—often has he mentioned you to me. Oh God!—Had he listened to you, he would never have been destined to know the remorse which the miseries of this night will, sooner or later, bring upon him!—My wife!—my wife!—Oh! Mr. Denham he has destroyed an angel!—She is a dreadful sacrifice to pride, to prejudice, and merciless resentment!—But triumph not, my lord, in her destruction, for I will not survive her!'

"How infinitely I was shocked by this speech, need not be told. The present, however, was no time to remonstrate with the unhappy youth. Lady Westmere might require my presence, and taking Mr. Rushden, who now entered the room, aside, I proposed to attend her. Lord Westmere guessed the subject of our whispering, for again approaching, and taking my hand, he

said, "I know what your benevolence has been proposing. I could read it in your countenance. But my Caroline is a Roman Catholic. I am above prejudice; yet she has been ever firm to that persuasion.' 'The prayers of true piety,' replied I, 'under whatever form, must ever be acceptable to the Most High. Let me go to her, I will endeavour to convince her of this.'

"His grief was unutterable; he was unable to thank me, but silently led the way to the sick chamber. Alas! the poor lady was in a violent delirium, and incapable of receiving the consolation I had hoped to render her. Dr. Monford, who had never quitted her, was unable to decide upon her condition till the medicines, &c. he had sent for, could be applied; his opinion then was the same; that she was in extreme danger, and that the only hope which remained was in the natural strength of her constitu-

tion. By her side lay her infant unconsciously smiling at the agonies of its wretched mother. Mrs. Rushden made several attempts to remove the poor babe, but without effect:—the eye of the fair sufferer was continually turned towards it, and if any one approached she caught it in frantic solicitude, to her throbbing bosom.

"I must hasten to the close of this mournful part of my story, for the remembrance, even at this distance of time, excites a painful emotion in my breast. By the skill and humanity of the good Dr. Monford, the life of lady Westmere was preserved two days longer, and a few hours before she died, her bodily pains ceased, and her reason was restored to her. I took every advantage of this blessed change, and so far succeeded over her prejudices as to prevail on her to receive the sacrament at my hands. About an hour after this

last solemn profession, she expired resigned and tranquil, in the arms of her lord, in the nineteenth year of her age!

"The attention of the Rushdens, on this occasion, was unremittingly kind; —as for the wretched husband, he stood over the corpse in a state of silent anguish that made me tremble for his intellects; nor was it without the utmost difficulty he could be torn from the dreadful spectacle!

"Thus ended the scheme of happiness this unfortunate youth had chalked out, and to which he had too fondly anticipated a joyful issue.. Yet cruel as his father had been, and still continued to be to him, such was his reverence for the name of parent, that he dreaded to think of the consequences a too abrupt annunciation of lady Westmere's untimely fate, and the manner of it, might produce upon his lordship's mind; and extorted from every person that was present at her death, or was at

all privy to the melancholy event and the circumstances preceding it, a solemn promise of secrecy, and that it should never be mentioned even that himself or his beloved Caroline had been so far on their journey into Northamptonshire, lest, on the other hand, it might appear, that he had determined in further defiance of paternal authority, to obtrude himself and his innocent wife upon his father's presence. As Dr. Monford's first report of lady Westmere's case made it necessary for me to remain at Newton Vale all that night, I lost no time in dispatching one of his lordship's servants to the rectory to inform my faithful Hannah of the business that would detain me possibly at Mr. Rushden's a day, or perhaps two days longer; at the same time cautioning her, in a short note, to say nothing about the matter to the gossiping people of the village, as I did not yet know how far it might be proper to send cir-

cumstances of so delicate a nature in circulation. Fortunate was it for the secret of my poor young friend, that I took this precaution, although in preserving it afterwards, as the worthy people at Stoke could form no probable guess at the cause of my detention, I and my concerns were obliged to undergo a very formidable scrutiny, and many were the curious conjectures entertained of an absence so extraordinary.

"I was reluctantly obliged to return the next day, but Mr. Rushden was punctual in letting me know how lord Westmere continued to support his loss, and his accounts were rather satisfactory than otherwise. His child, for whom a nurse had been instantly provided, continued strong and healthy, and the father became every hour more and more composed and resigned to his misfortune. He had resolved that the remains of his beloved should be carried privately to Iversfield, and buried there in conformity

to the faith in which she died, by father Denis, the priest who had married her. He had also expressed a strong desire to see me again, previously to the removal of the body, an intimation to which I paid immediate attention.

"I found his lordship, though still under the pressure of the deepest affliction, relieved from that gloomy torpor which is not unfrequently the fore-runner of mental distemperature. He fervently embraced me, and it rejoiced me to see the tears start from his eyes as he took his infant from the nurse's arms and passionately held it to his bosom. 'To the care of these worthy friends,' said he, (alluding to the Rushden's) 'it is my intention, Mr. Denham, to leave this lovely pledge.' Here the tears choked his utterance; and returning the child to the nurse, he continued:—'I had better, I think, not take him with me?' 'By no means, my lord,' returned I, 'take him with you, only to bring

him back again,—you will, of course, pursue your way to Rothwell Castle?'—'To Rothwell Castle?' exclaimed he, 'no, Mr. Denham, no more can I sue for forgiveness. Did I not tell you, sir, that my father had abandoned me?' 'But he will not,' replied I calmly, 'abandon your child!' 'Will he not,' resumed he wildly, 'then we will go to him together:—and you will accompany, will plead for us, my reverend friend; I know you will.'

"I now saw that the paroxysm of grief was returning, and endeavoured to change the subject. He would not, however, be satisfied, till I had promised on his return from Iversfield to be his companion into Northamptonshire, and to assist him, when his mind was in a fitter state to receive such benefit, with my counsel and consolation. I even offered, as did Rushden, to attend him to Ireland, but he would not listen to such a proposal. 'Be not afraid of me,' said

he, 'my dear Mr. Denham, I think my fortitude will at least support me till I arrive at Iversfield, and there I shall find a comforter in Mr. Etherington almost equal to yourself.'

"The following morning, early, the corpse was removed to Shrewsbury, attended by lord Westmere and his valet in a post-chaise, and two out-riders;—and in the evening of the same day they pursued their melancholy journey to Holyhead.

CHAP. VIII.

Continuation and conclusion of the history.

"As I never suffered myself to be drawn from my parishioners by objects however attractive, wherein my duty was not actually concerned, I contented myself with hearing, from time to time, of the thriving state of the infant, and Rushden was pretty punctual in his information. A week, however, had nearly elapsed, without a message from him, and as I had but once been at Newton-vale, since lord Westmere's departure, I was induced, from this omission of intelligence, to repeat my visit. I found the worthy couple in great distress, on account of the sudden death of Martha, the child's nurse,

'Alas! Mr. Denham,' said Mrs. Rushden, 'this melancholy event, succeeded by a disaster equally distressing to us, though we loved poor Martha, too!'—'Good God!' cried I, directing my eye towards the child who was asleep in the cradle:—'Oh!' continued she, 'it relates not to the young lord; he, I thank God, is as blooming and hearty as I could wish him. But you remember the beautiful miniature of lady Westmere, that my lord left in Mr. Rushden's charge, before his departure, lest, by any accident, he should be robbed of it, or lose it during his journey. Oh! Mr. Denham, it is gone.' Here a deep and convulsive sigh from Rushden, interrupted his wife; she, however, proceeded to inform me, that poor Martha had been taken ill at Shrewsbury, 'whither,' continued the good lady, 'she had gone with my husband to get the picture from a jeweller, to whom I had sent it to be repaired, for I had un-

fortunately let it fall three or four days before, while examining it, and injuring the enamel so much, as made me ashamed of returning it to his lordship in such a state. I wish to God I had had more courage!'—'Would to Heaven!' interrupted Rushden, striking his hand against his forehead, 'I had had more.' —'Well, Sir,' resumed his wife, 'the picture had been vastly well done by our good friend, Mr. Madden, the jeweller, but poor Martha was obliged, soon after her arrival at Shrewsbury, to go to her sister's, having been suddenly seized with violent spasms in the stomach. I doubt she over-heated herself with walking. Be that as it may, she grew worse and worse, and, in spite of all the worthy doctor Monford could do for her, died in violent agonies before Mr. Rushden left the town. Now, Sir, whether it was concern for the untimely fate of this poor girl, or from what other cause I know not, but

my poor husband did not think of securing the miniature so safely as he might have done, and lost it out of his pocket. In vain were our enquiries about it, in vain have been our offers of reward since; the picture was, unfortunately, set round with diamonds, and is, I fear, irrecoverably gone.'

"I said every thing I could to comfort my poor friends at Newton. 'Lord Westmere, doubtless,' I observed, 'must, more than ever, value a miniature of his lady; but his grief for its loss, will, rely upon it, be unattended with reproaches; for he will think upon the pain you will have already suffered from the misfortune. There is a candour and a benevolence about this young nobleman I have rarely ever met with.'

"Notwithstanding these assurances, I could not satisfy Rushden, till I had promised to be myself the announcer of this new calamity to his lordship.

"My young friend's return to New-

ton-vale, was later than I expected. I was summoned from Stoke, on his arrival, and was more grieved than surprised, to observe his pallid countenance, and reduced form.—'Dear Mr. Denham,' said he, embracing me, 'we must endeavour to bury all past griefs in oblivion. Myself, and that little wretch,' pointing to his child, who lay in the nurse's arms, 'are destined to remain in shameful obscurity. Is it not terrible to reflect, that the nearer we approach the grave, the more attached we seem to be to those imperfections which disqualify us for a life of immortality?'—'How, my lord,' cried I, 'is it possible that the earl's anger is still unsubdued? Have you seen, or written to him?'—'He commanded me, I confess, to do neither,' replied Westmere, 'but could you have imagined that, on the death of my adored wife, he would have been otherwise than happy in forgetting my former disobedience, and

have stretched out a protecting hand to his grandchild? Yet he has rejected my plea in silence and contempt. The morning after I had consigned my beloved to the tomb, I wrote an account of her death to him: I appealed to his justice and humanity in behalf of her child: I wrote to my mother too; but, alas! Mr. Denham: My mother—that mother on whose support I had rested my defence, on whose influence with my father I had grounded my expectations of forgiveness;—she was also contemptuously silent. Dazzled by the glare of a loose and dissipated society, surrounded by the sycophants of the day, who even at this moment are sedulously employed in inventing new modes of gratifying her vanity—to such a heart, my friend, how vainly directed was the language of tender supplication.'—'Yet, my lord,' replied I, 'be pacified; pursue your former plans. The worthy Dr. Compton will still expect you, and

much may be effected by his interference.'—'No, my reverend friend,' replied he, in a tone of gloomy resolution, 'I cannot condescend to meanness, even to a father. To supplicate him further, is impossible. It is my intention to quit England—quit it, perhaps, for ever. In the peaceful shades of Iversfield, I must endeavour to forget that my parents were ever unjust to their repentant son. My child will find in Mr. Etherington an instructor; and I, a companion. In contemplating the progress of my sweet boy's studies, and in forming his disposition, I may learn to forget those sorrows which now press upon me, and in time feel comparative happiness. Yes, Mr. Denham, the time may still come, when this abandoned branch of an illustrious house may shoot forth blossoms to revive and sustain the sinking trunk!'

"I had nothing to say in opposition to a plan of retirement; I could not disapprove, however I might regret the

necessity of adopting it. Westmere, of a noble family, with fine talents, and a mind to exercise them for the benefit of posterity, to be thus secluded from the world, that the sinful prejudices of his father might be gratified, and that he might brood over his uncharitableness, were circumstances deeply to be lamented; but they appeared irremediable, and I could only sigh out an assent to his scheme.

"My noble friend was very much shocked by the loss of his lady's picture; more so, indeed, than I had apprehended. He shut himself up in the room for some hours, after I had communicated the intelligence to him, then summoned me and said:—'I have been endeavouring to reconcile my mind to this terrible loss, Mr. Denham, but, believe me, it has been a severe trial, after what I have already sustained.'—'And the poor Rushdens, my lord?' replied I.—'They have nothing to fear

from my reproaches,' rejoined he, 'however they may have deserved them.' There was an asperity in this speech that did not apply to forgiveness: indeed, the carelessness of Rushden was scarcely to be excused on any ground. I, however, at length succeeded in gaining a full pardon for them, and an act of oblivion was passed on the subject.

"The return of this unhappy young nobleman to Ireland, with his child, took place soon after. As lord Westmere had, on all occasions, spoken of Mr. Etherington in the highest terms of praise, I desisted from a request I had many times been induced to make; namely, that I might christen the infant, being persuaded it was his intention that the worthy and respectable man above-mentioned, should perform this ceremony. Our separation, on all sides, was affecting. Mr. and Mrs. Rushden, whom he had pledged himself most amply to remember, whenever

opportunity put it in his power, were much moved, especially Rushden, whose emotions were even more violent than his wife's. Me, his lordship embraced in the most affectionate manner. 'God knows,' said he,' my dear and revered friend, if we shall ever meet again! unless, indeed, you could come to Iversfield; but your precepts will ever be imprinted on my mind, and you will not refuse to continue them by your correspondence?'—I assured him of my punctuality in this instance, and of my constant regard for his happiness.

" In this profession, indeed, I was no more than sincere. It had often occurred to me, that, at a time when, as lord Westmere had previously informed me, his father's eyes were no longer shut to the extravagances and indiscretions of the countess, the reception of a letter from his old friend might not prove unacceptable. I adverted to the principles of general rectitude, and that just

sense of propriety which had, in the days of his youth, regulated his conduct, and I conceived that his mind was now if ever, to be recalled to a virtuous exertion of its functions.

"Could I have succeeded in my endeavours so to have recalled it; could I have once engaged him to agree with me dispassionately on the subject of his rigorous treatment of his amiable son, I am convinced I should have been equally successful in making him acknowledge the unjust extent of his severity, but I failed in my attempt. I wrote,—and my letter was replied to; but in a manner so cold and repulsive, as to forbid a renewal of the correspondence. Deeply, indeed, was I afflicted to find that my earliest friend and patron was no longer the disciple of reason, but the slave of prejudice; that his disappointments, instead of strengthening, had weakened his mind, and that he was in a state to derive satisfaction only by

brooding over his vexations, and the quickest means of revenging them.

"From this period, my dear Ralph, to the memorable day on which he interrupted our conversation at the rectory, I never saw my excellent friend, his son. Yet year after year he wrote to me to inform me of his own, and his son's health, but that lord Ardendale still continued inflexible.

"I confess that I sometimes felt inclined to attempt paying him a visit, but my attachments to Stoke were too various and strong. My parishioners looked up to me with confidence, and my heart told me I ought not to desert them.

"Of the earl and the countess, lord Westmere continued to write me occasional accounts from year to year, but they all tended to grieve and alarm me.

"Notwithstanding the bad impressions I had received of my old friend, notwithstanding the almost contemptuous indifference with which he had

treated me, I had not ceased to hope that the dark prospects before him would, sooner or later, be dissipated, and that he would discern and grasp at returning virtue through the gloom! I was, in the end, disappointed. You remember, my dear Ralph, the sudden, and to you, strange appearance of the present earl at the rectory at Stoke. He did not come unexpected. About a month before, I had received a letter from him, stating, that in consequence of the rapid decay of his unfortunate mother the countess, and the no less alarming state of his father's health from frequent and violent attacks of the gout a very great change had taken place at Rothwell Castle. That it was no longer the seat of luxury and dissipation, but sickness, affliction, and remorse. That, at the earnest request of the earl, who was unable to write himself, the good Dr. Compton had informed him, that both his lordship and the countess were,

at length, sensible of their unjust severity towards him, and were desirous of seeing and blessing him and their grandchild without delay. Further, that in consequence of this intimation, he was preparing to sail immediately for England, and had written to recal his son, who unfortunately had, a week only before, set out with Mr. Etherington on a tour of the kingdom, desiring him to follow with all possible speed. That the urgency of the case would not allow him to tarry a moment on the road, but that on his arrival at Rothwell Castle, he would write to me again. He was, however, prevented from fulfilling his promise immediately, as the earl and the countess only survived the satisfaction of once more holding their much wronged child in their arms.

"An account of their deaths I shall show you, my dear Ralph, in the present earl's own words, which will give you a better view of his character than I have

been able to afford you. This last letter from him I received not long prior to his appearance at Stoke."

Mr. Denham here rose, and opening his escritoir took from thence the epistle in question, which he opened and read, as follows.

"Dear and Rev. Friend,

"Till now, I have not been able to fulfil my promise, as my attention has been wholly occupied by the most awful and afflicting scenes!—The conflict is, at length, over;—my venerable parents are no more, and I turn from the ruin and desolation around me, to receive from you the only comfort, that, in such an extremity, can successfully be administered—the comfort of religion.

"It was originally my intention to have deferred writing to you till I should have discharged the last sad duties; but I found I could not, for so long a period, trust myself with my own

reflections, lest they should entirely incapacitate me from observing that resignation to the will of Heaven, which in the mournful ceremony I am still to perform, I know to be so requisite.

"On my arrival, I found the family in a state of confusion and apprehension for which I had not been altogether prepared. Dr. Compton, it is true, had informed me that the countess was in a decline, but I had no conception her dissolution was so near as I read in the countenances of every domestic, it was. The good doctor returned my salutation, indeed, with a solemnity so striking that for a moment I thought all was over.

"'My mother, then,' said I, 'my dear sir, is dead?'—'No, my lord,' replied he, 'not dead;—but, I fear ——' 'Can I not see her, then?' returned I, 'assuredly, my lord,' answered he, 'she expects you. We will go together.'—'Is my father with her?' demanded I, as we ascended the staircase that led to the

countess's chamber. 'Lord Ardendale is ill,' replied the doctor, '*very* ill. Did I not write you word so?' 'You did, my dear sir,' cried I, 'but, good God! is *he* too?'—'My lord,' interrupted the worthy man, 'it would be criminal in me to deceive you with any positive assurance of the earl's safety. I have, however, removed the gout from his stomach, and a few hours will enable me to give a more decided, and, I hope, favourable opinion. At present he is weak:—very weak.'

"When we entered the countess's chamber, she was dozing. I gazed in silent anguish on her emaciated countenance; on the fatal hectic that played faintly over her cheek. The sudden convulsions that interrupted her struggling efforts to breathe convinced me that death had already given the blow!—I turned to Dr. Compton; he pressed my hand, but was silent;—and, at that instant, my mother opened her eyes for the

last time. She fixed them on me, and a faint emotion of her countenance convinced me she recollected me. I knelt by her bed-side, and taking her hand, pressed it respectfully to my lips!—To speak, I was unable: Dr. Compton having administered a cordial, she made a last effort. 'Let me bless you, my son,' said she, extending her arms over me, 'while I am able. You have had great—great reason to complain; but I see you come not to upbraid, but to forgive us. Oh! Westmere, what, in moments like these, avail the distinctions I have been so anxious to obtain? The dreams of ambition, pride, and dissipation are at an end. But I have long been sensible of my infirmities, and I die happy. But your child, Westmere!—Let me'——A sudden convulsion seized her, and, ere another effort could be made to restore her, she was gone for ever!

"Though the countess's death had

been long expected, it was deemed prudent by Dr. Compton, to keep it a secret from my father till some decisive change should take place in his disorder. It was, however, necessary that I should attend him, as he had been told of my arrival at the castle; and, though I was in hourly expectation of my son, the doctor advised me by no means to defer so essential a duty. When I entered his chamber, he was sitting up in his bed, supported by pillows. I need not describe the agitation of my mind, as I approached him. At first he did not recollect me; but, on taking his hand, he surveyed me more attentively, and then exclaimed, 'Yes;—it is Westmere. But,' continued he, shaking his head, ''tis no wonder that I forget these matters. I have wronged you, my son, my cruelty has killed your wife, but my *expiation* is at hand. And your boy!—my grandson!—where is he?'

"Oh! my friend, conceive the dis-

traction of my mind in not being able to produce him! the earl repeated the question, and I was then compelled to explain the cause of his not being yet arrived at the castle. 'But, my lord,' continued I, 'I expect him every moment!' My father again shook his head. There was a dreadful expression in his countenance, that too forcibly anticipated the approach of dissolution. Dr. Compton himself observed a change, and requested I would withdraw awhile. 'My dear lord,' whispered he, 'a very little time must now decide the fate of the earl. Nature is making great efforts; but indeed I cannot, I ought not to flatter you. I fear it is too late!'—I again kissed my father's hand, and left the room, vainly endeavouring to stifle the throbs that convulsed my bosom. Retiring to the drawing-room, I there beheld the venerable baron Leybrook, who, having been apprized of my arrival, and the death of my mother, had,

with his usual humane consideration, and unmindful of his age and infirmities, set off post from Castle Leybrook to be near and to console his old friend the earl. The good man tenderly embraced me, but was much shocked to understand that my son was not yet arrived. He paused a few minutes, but observing that my anxiety on this occasion was painful almost beyond bearing, he changed the subject, and, at my particular request, imparted to me all that he knew of the progress and completion of the reformation at Rothwell, and of the causes, that, long prior to her death, had wrought so blessed a change in the disposition of my beloved mother!—'From the fashionable throng,' observed the baron, 'that had for so many years been supporting and encouraging her in the regular routine of dissipation, there was one man more daring and licentious than the rest, who had the presumption to carry on a villainous design

against a young lady then on a visit to the countess; and was heard to say that he was sure lady Ardendale had too much *good breeding*, too much *good sense*, and was too much a *woman of the world*, to think of interrupting him in an affair of gallantry, whether with maid, wife, or widow!—The countess now saw for the first time, to what dangerous extremes she had carried her love of splendour, gay company, and profusion. Beyond the mere forms of general gallantry, she had never given herself the trouble to examine; she was therefore both surprised and shocked when the observations and designs of this profligate wretch were announced to her. To be thought an encourager, or even a tolerator of the vile principles of libertinism was a circumstance equally degrading to her feelings and her pride, and, after some struggles, she determined to send and consult me on the subject.

"'Many months had elapsed since I

had visited Rothwell. Equally disgusted by the servile crowd that I always met there, as hurt at the weakness, and want of feeling in the earl, who could consent to participate in a continued round of extravagance, and yet be insensible to the sorrows of his banished son; I conceived it beneath my character and my age to *seem* even to lend support to a conduct so reprehensible.

"'To the countess's message, which from its purport both surprised and pleased me, I, however, paid immediate attention, and replied to her indignant representation of the circumstance before mentioned, in, nearly as I can recollect, the following words.

"'I am, believe me, my dear madam, much gratified that your ladyship has thus condescended to repose in me a confidence of so much importance; and will now take the liberty of making such observations on this affair, as, at present suggest themselves to my mind. In the

great chart of human life there are certain paths which lead to pleasure, in which virtue will always deign to accompany the traveller ;—but these delightful satisfactions are not variable :—as the needle to the north, they are attracted to one great object—the acquirement of universal love and esteem. Were this the general object of high life, there would be no time for indulging the fancy in the gratification of mere selfish vanities !—There would be no fêtes !—No extravagant novelties let loose among us to surprise one day, and be buried in oblivion the next, because no ultimate advantage would be found to result from them to society :—no real happiness administered, no additional incitement to morality called forth. But a change so beneficial must be the work of *example :* for by example alone can we ever expect to see mutual benevolence the standard of public manners. If, instead of decorating his person with

a more fanciful dress, or being a more constant attendant at a rout, some sprig of true nobility was to set the fashion of writing good and useful books, supporting and encouraging good and useful men, and disregarding all other recommendations save those of real merit and unblemished reputation, what a distinguished character would then be a *fashionable* man! To see my lord D—— and Sir Harry G—— no longer shining forth in the annals of crim. con. but in the annals of a useful, a benevolent, and a religious society. With a just sense of what is due to your dignity as a countess, my dear madam, you have unconsciously been forgetful of that caution and discretion which should ever be the concomitants of your sex. Had you tried by the rules of strict propriety the fashionable laws that have so long permitted you to associate with every claimant to fortune and title, you would have found them miserably defective,

since they make no provision for the exclusion of the infamous, so long as they can support these claims. Thus defended, therefore, the seducer, the adulterer, and even the murderer may continue their ravages unmolested, whilst at the very tables where they are thus incautiously received, and by noblemen, who are, perhaps, an honour to their country, they securely plan some fresh offence to public tranquillity, or discover fresh objects of seduction. And why are not such encroachers discovered? because the judgment has no means of operating amidst a round of diversions ever-varying and fascinating to the senses!—An elegant person, an easy air, and a smooth delivery are all the requisites required on these occasions; and are not these to be found among the most worthless wretches?

"'Forgive me, lady Ardendale, if I venture to observe, that, from the first moment you became a convert to fa-

shionable life, your reputation was exposed to danger. Not that your own thoughts wounded further than the pastime of the hour, but that you innocently became the harbourer of such profligates as I have before described. These, with "unbashful forehead," buzz abroad their scandalous triumphs, and report at what *kind, convenient, fashionable assembly* they first projected their designs. Yet, still their visits are admitted, till at length the mistress of the house is supposed to wink at their enormities, and even the libertines themselves begin to favor the supposition, by throwing off by degrees even the appearance of respect in her presence, or the presence of her friends.'

"'This was the substance of what I said to your mother, my lord, and most fervently shall I ever rejoice that it ultimately stamped that impression on her mind, which paved the way for a total reform at the castle. From that hour

I saw her and the earl almost every day, and the countess became more and more convinced of her former imprudences. Your father, indeed, had long panted for an opportunity of shaking off the yoke, which his fondness for lady Ardendale had originally prevailed upon him to bear, and uniting with me to complete the cure so happily began, it was not a long time ere I had the happiness of witnessing the restoration of peace and good order to the venerable walls of Rothwell-castle.

" 'But though I had succeeded in weaning the countess from dissipation, I was not so fortunate in my victory over the prejudices of the earl. His invincible hatred of lord Carringsfort and his family still continued, and consequently his indignation towards you. The countess was, however, shocked at the fate of lady Westmere, and if she had had spirits at the time, might possibly have exerted them in favour of a

reconciliation, but her constitution was then beginning to sink under the pressure of former imprudences, and though so many years have elapsed, she has never held up her head since. Frequent and serious attacks of the gout, brought your father, at length, to a fair and dispassionate consideration of your case; and to vanquished pride, succeeded that remorse and sudden anxiety to see you at the castle, which occasioned the letter you received from Dr. Compton.'

"Here, my dear Mr. Denham, the worthy baron concluded his interesting account, for which I had scarcely time to thank him, when a servant hastily entered, and informed us that Dr. Compton wished to see us above. With a trepidation, not to be described, I hastened to obey the summons; lord Leybrook remained below. The doctor met me at the door of my father's chamber, and taking me to an adjoining room—

'My lord,' said he, and his voice trembled, 'your father wishes to see you; but it is my duty to tell you it will be for *the last time!* A mortification has taken place!'—I hurried into the chamber,—the earl was sensible—he pressed my hand, and, at the same moment, the venerable baron Leybrook entered the room.—'Your son is not arrived then, Harry?' cried my dying father. I could not speak. 'My dear baron,' continued he, addressing lord Leybrook, 'remember what I said some time since, regarding my little Louisa. If possible, let not our families be separated!—'Yet,' sighing and casting a last glance towards his disobedient son, 'inclination *will* have way, and must not—no, it *ought* not to be thwarted!' Then, grasping my hand—'Adieu! my Harry!—Your poor mother!—I must not think of her; (he knew not that she was dead) but your child! bless, oh, bless him!' He then sunk back

on his pillow, and, in a quarter of an hour, expired in my arms!

"Here let me draw a veil over the sacredness of grief, and close my melancholy recital. Expect me with you after the solemnization of the funeral; Dr. Compton is giving all necessary directions—I am unable. Lord Leybrook has left me; the scene has been too much for his spirits.

"My son is this moment arrived. But two hours sooner—and—but God's will be done!—I have written to Rushden to prepare me a bed at Newtonvale,—I have some matters to consult with you upon, on the success of which may possibly depend my future tranquillity. Adieu!—pray for me, my reverend friend, that I may be able to support myself in the hour of trial!"

Rothwell-castle,
August 5th, 17—.

"You will naturally conceive, my

dear Ralph, that my mind was much affected by the perusal of this epistle. If you recollect, I did not, about the time I received it, attend so punctually at Stoke-hill, or to your education; and I remember your kind benefactress once asking me with a smile on her countenance, if I had begun to reverse the order of things, and to play truant instead of my scholar.

"As I had never seen the present lord Westmere since he was an infant, I could form no judgment either of his mind or person; and yet, from several hints in former letters from his father when in Ireland, it was not difficult for me to guess what the business so important to his happiness was, and on which he was hastening to consult me. I had, indeed, no doubt but it was to draw me from my peaceful dwelling at Stoke, to officiate at Rothwell-castle as his domestic chaplain, and the tutor of his son; and though no selfish or am-

bitious motive whatever could have attracted me from my retirement, a summons from the son of my first benefactor was, on no pretence, to be disobeyed.

"As Miss Leybrook has already informed you of the principal events that have since occurred at Rothwell-castle, I need not repeat them. The dreadful and unexpected fate of Mr. and Mrs. Rushden was followed by circumstances which made my longer residence in the earl's family impossible. While lord Westmere submitted to my authority as his tutor, I did not despair of my instructions making their due impression on his mind, but, as this had, in several instances, been disputed by him, and as lord Ardendale could not be persuaded to decide against him; I then lost all confidence in their influence, and prepared to retire again into the bosom of tranquillity. The debt due to gratitude was paid, so far as opportunity

and circumstances would permit; the mere show of being grateful it was not in my power to support.

"Another change which would of itself have determined me to quit Northamptonshire, was the election of the Valpines to the departments vacated by the deaths of Mr. Rushden and his wife! Good God! Ralph, how did my soul, even then, recoil at the idea of living under the same roof with the man who, notwithstanding what I then supposed his generosity to you, I looked upon as the destroyer of your principles, and the original corrupter of your heart! And now!—But Justice makes it necessary that *now* I should bear with him, villain as he is: for, we must remember, my dear boy, we can bring no positive evidence of his guilt; nor have we any clue by which we can trace the motives of his conduct. With men like him, art can only be opposed by art. Whatever may be our

detestation, therefore, of his character, it is absolutely necessary we should, in the first instance, suppress it."

Here Mr. Denham concluded his narrative, and here we think proper to put a period to this long Chapter.

CHAP. IX.

Containing, among other matters, a conversation, which, if it prove as disagreeable to the reader as it did to the hero of the history, the author had better have omitted.

EARLY on the following morning, another express arrived from town with the following lines from lord Ardendale:

"Your letter has greatly surprised us all. My son was not at home when my messenger returned with it. Mr. Valpine was with me. His astonishment at the contents suddenly gave way to an indignation I own I could not account for. He accused your young friend of having ungratefully misapplied his bounty, and wasted what was intend-

ed to place him in an honourable establishment, in extravagance and idleness. 'I delivered this young man, my lord,' observed he, 'from a prison where he must inevitably have perished, to put independence and respectability within his reach; it is obvious that he has dissipated the means of acquiring either, in a country where he could have little temptation to squander, and hopes now, through the medium of a man whose kindness he has already abused, but whose weak partiality, I perceive, even ingratitude cannot subdue, to be admitted an humble candidate for your lordship's favours. But I am satisfied you will give no encouragement to such a recommendation, even from Mr. Denham.

"I shall make no comments on this speech, my friend, till I see you, and hear what this young man, Mr. Reybridge, has to say in his defence. In the mean time, it is sufficient that *you*

are his advocate, to give him a warm place in my opinion, and a welcome to my house. Bring him, therefore, by all means.

Your affectionate friend,

"ARDENDALE."

Grosvenor-square,
Saturday night.

As this was the morning the good rector had fixed for the commencement of his journey to London with his young friends, an early breakfast and a post-chaise had been ordered, and all other necessary matters arranged accordingly.

The speech of Valpine, as set down in lord Ardendale's words, only served to confirm the old clergyman in his opinion, that the presence of our hero was an obstacle in the way of some villanous scheme of interest, but what it could possibly be, seemed to defy the power of human art to discover.

Ralph, whose heart was torn by differ-

rent sensations, was incapable, at present, of forming any judgment of the behaviour it was his duty to maintain. More and more captivated by the expressive face, the attractive voice, the engaging behaviour of the beautiful Louisa, yet withheld by every tie of honour from shewing her even common attention lest he should exceed the bounds prescribed by Mr. Denham, he entered the same post-chaise with her under feelings that Tantalus himself would scarcely have envied him.

Nothing of any consequence occurred during their journey to London, except that Mr. Denham had been more silent than was his custom in company with those he loved. As they approached the metropolis, however, the good man thus addressed Miss Leybrook. "Have you, my dear young lady, turned your thoughts, at all, to that part of your guardian's first letter which mentions lord Westmere's compunction for his

rash behaviour?—and am I permitted to plead his cause once more?" "Alas! my reverend friend," replied Louisa, "after such behaviour, equally selfish and ungovernable; betraying a disposition without delicacy, prudence, or reflection; what dependance can be placed upon him?—Treated in such a manner by him in the capacity of a lover only, what insults may I not reasonably expect from him as a husband?—Indeed, Mr. Denham, I tremble at the thoughts of vowing obedience to a man who might exact it with arbitrary caprice to gratify a selfish pride, without respect and without tenderness."—"Perhaps, my dear," answered the rector, "you may have formed too harsh an opinion of this young man, allow me, who have read the volume of the human heart with deeper attention, to say a little in mitigation of the present offence. This impetuosity of temper of which you so justly complain, has, I should conceive,

proceeded more from the earl's constant indulgence of him, and compliance with every wish, than from a natural defect; and it is observable, through life, that those who have never been thwarted or contradicted, can ill brook opposition when it *does* come, nor are they prepared to take into consideration whether it be justly or unjustly made. Assuredly the admission of lord Westmere that his conduct towards you was faulty, and his request to his father that you should not be longer annoyed, are proofs that he is not altogether destitute of delicacy, or feeling; and, in truth, I am inclined to hope and believe that the constant contemplation of virtue in the fair form of my sweet Louisa, will correct, and finally extinguish in his breast this habitual infirmity of temper. By the time you come of age, this will be seen, and indeed the general stamp of his character will be better known; but, before that period, I hope you will not

resolve positively to reject him, and that you will give me authority so to tell the earl. I can scarcely conceive it possible that any man capable of estimating merit at all, or of feeling the power of beauty, would ever, my dear Miss Leybrook, prove insensible to the possession of a heart like yours, and"——Here the old rector's warmth in the cause of his noble friend's son, was suddenly checked by the recollection of what he had observed in the looks and expressions of poor Reybridge, and that the more he paid the just tribute of applause to the beauty and accomplishments of this lovely girl, the more he might be cherishing an ill-fated passion. "However, my dear Miss Leybrook," continued he, "I will own that lord Westmere seems to have been greatly attached to a town life, and to dissipated habits since his first introduction into society, and I will likewise own, that while he continues to prefer such frivolous, and

in some degree criminal, pursuits, to those rational schemes of life which can be the only security for real and lasting happiness, you ought not to be his wife; and I shall in that case as strongly object to the union as I would, on the contrary, promote it."—"And do you really think, my dèar sir," replied Miss Leybrook, "that lord Westmere, devoted as he now certainly is to every fashionable folly, will consent on any terms to relinquish them?"—"On the terms of being rewarded by your hand, I think he will," replied the rector; "the conversation of an amiable woman loses half its force when it is directed to hearers only interested for the moment; but lord Westmere will, on every occasion, naturally advert to the pleasing probability of one day having the warmest and most permanent interest in every thing you say or do, and his attention will, of course, be proportionably stronger. To judge of the stock from

whence he sprung, the seeds of virtue must surely be latent in his heart, and will gradually shoot forth as he sees, and is sensible of, the merits of the woman who is to become his wife."

Here the fair Louisa heaved a sigh, which, in spite of all opposition on the part of honour and prudence, made its way to our hero's heart. Poor Reybridge, indeed, had been listening to the above discourse with about as much delight as a disinherited son hears the will of his father read which cuts him off with a shilling in favor of a stranger.

Mr. Denham now quitted the subject, having satisfied himself that he had made an impression on the mind of his fair friend, and turning to our hero began an indifferent conversation with him; but Ralph made so many blunders, that the good man was fain to have recourse to a nap,

and the young couple to counting the lamps which now began to warn them of their near approach to Hyde-Park Corner.

CHAP. X.

Containing much *or* little *to the purpose, as the reader may choose to take it.*

It was ten o'clock before the chaise drove up to the door of lord Ardendale's house, in Grosvenor-square. The good old man and his fair charge were received by the servants with the warmest demonstrations of joy, and notice of their arrival was immediately carried to the earl.

Mr. Denham did not think it advisable to introduce Reybridge till after the first interview between his lordship and his ward. Ralph was therefore requested to wait in an anti-chamber, where he had time to recollect himself,

and prepare for an introduction, which, though he had no reason to dread, he could not be wholly indifferent to.

A servant at length appeared, to conduct him to the drawing-room, and from him he learned, that neither lord Westmere nor Mr. Valpine was at home, and that Miss Leybrook had retired to her chamber.

Our hero's spirits were considerably raised by this intelligence; for though he had nothing to apprehend from the presence of either of the parties, yet he knew that the less he appeared confused on his first meeting with the earl, the stronger would be the presumption of his innocence. Lord Ardendale was standing with his face towards the fire, as Reybridge was announced, but, instantly turning round, he regarded the youth, as he approached, with an astonishment so remarkable, that Ralph blushed and retreated. "Good God!" at length exclaimed the earl, "that coun-

tenance!—Surely I have seen it before."—"Oh! where, my lord?" replied the rector, starting from his chair, and seizing his friend's hand, "where have you seen a countenance like his?"—"At lord Carringsfort's:" replied the earl; "his brother's picture—St. Aubyn's picture, done when an ensign in the army!"—"Alas! my lord," replied Mr. Denham, "and yet the colonel; did he die abroad, my lord?"—"No;" returned lord Ardendale, "I believe in England, and in circumstances of distress."—The good rector was again puzzled—he had conceived it possible that colonel St. Aubyn and Mr. Mapleton might have been the same person; yet, Mr. Mapleton, though not a rich, was by no means a needy man. Still here was a sudden light thrown upon the mysterious gloom of our hero's circumstances, and it became necessary that the events of his life should be unfolded with as little delay

as possible.—"My lord," continued he, "to-morrow morning, when your lordship shall have heard my poor boy's story, you will perhaps be better able to account for the very extraordinary resemblance you have perceived; till then, I shall forbear troubling you with any questions."—"Indeed, Mr. Denham," replied the earl, "you surprise me very much. The parents of my regretted wife had children besides her, but they died *young*."—"And where did Mrs. St. Aubyn die? or *is* she dead?" returned the rector, still more agitated.—"Of course, my reverend friend," rejoined the earl, "she is dead, or do you imagine she could so long have lived estranged from me?"—"True, my dear lord," answered the rector, "forgive my want of consideration on the subject, and attribute it only"—Here the opening of the drawing-room door, and the entrance of young Westmere and Valpine, put an end to all further observa-

tion on the subject. Lord Ardendale immediately presenting our hero to his son; "I hope, Frederick," said he, "you are prepared to receive this young gentleman with that regard which is due to the adopted child of your tutor. If we are to judge from the countenance, he will not disgrace your friendship."—To this, Westmere made no reply, but received our hero's obeisance with becoming civility. "Mr. Valpine," then observed lord Ardendale, "I cannot help feeling persuaded, that Mr. Reybridge, though I have not yet heard his story, is guiltless of the extravagance you have laid to his charge, and that he has not misapplied any bounty he may have received from you." —"My lord," replied Mr. Valpine, "I have no doubt but he will be very well able to defend himself from the imputation, and that your lordship is prepared to pay all due attention and consideration to what he may have to

say. In regard to myself, it is a matter of perfect indifference whether he stands acquitted or not, for I confess I can no longer feel interested in the conduct and concerns of a young man who has paid so little deference to the advice of *those* to whom he stands indebted for his liberty, and perhaps his life."—"He must, first, Mr. Valpine," observed the old rector sternly, "know where *these benefactors*, you mention, are to be found!"—"My lord," interrupted Valpine hastily, and turning to the earl, "from the conversation I had with your lordship yesterday, I understand that I am to be accused by Mr. Denham, and possibly by Mr. Reybridge himself, of certain transactions, concealments, and mysteries, relative to the latter gentleman, and upon no better foundation than their bare suspicions. To such an accusation, I shall now and for ever disdain to make any reply.—My lord, good night."—"Stay, Sir," replied the

earl, with some severity, "the footing on which I have hitherto considered you in my family,"—"Lord Ardendale," interrupted Valpine, "I am duly sensible of the obligations I owe to you, of the flattering distinction paid me by your son. It is this kindness, my lord, that makes me now the more sensibly alive to an imputation of guilt cast upon my character; especially where assertion can only be answered by assertion. Excuse, therefore, my warmth. Convinced of your lordship's justice, I am under no apprehensions of being cross-questioned, but I cannot submit to it. To general points, however, I shall to-morrow be willing to answer your lordship, alone; at present I am rather indisposed, and beg leave to retire."—Valpine now withdrew, and a pause succeeded. At length lord Ardendale arose—"Mr. Denham," said he, "I observe you are surprised at the freedom of address which Mr. Valpine has, on this occasion, thought

proper to make use of, but it shall be for the last time. Westmere, I hope *you* are now convinced that this man is no longer an object of your esteem, or even attention, since he has so strangely forgotten the respect due to me."—"I am, I own, my lord," replied Westmere, "rather surprised at his conduct this evening, but much must be ascribed to the peevishness of increasing years, some of which have been soured by misfortune, and certainly much to the sudden shock which any man, in his situation, and conscious of the rectitude of his own principles, must have felt on finding himself merely suspected of having acted basely towards an object which, it is generally known, he once very liberally befriended."—"Of that fact, I, however," replied the earl, "am yet to be satisfied. In the mean time, till I hear every particular of Mr. Reybridge's story, I shall wave my decision either one way or the other."—Here

ended the conversation, and the parties separated for the night.

Early on the following morning, Mr. Denham, unknown even to our hero, took a coach, in order to pay a visit to a gentleman who may possibly, by this time, have escaped the recollection of our readers. This was no other than the worthy, but no less officious Mr. Horton: the person, who had supplied Ralph with his money, his letters of recommendation, and all other necessaries for his voyage. From this gentleman, the old rector made no doubt of receiving some very useful information concerning Valpine's real motives; at all events, that he should be able to discover whether he was the principal, or only an agent in the business of Ralph's transportation; but the worthy man was only more and more perplexed by the result of his enquiries. The busy gentleman still resided in Cornhill, and was fortunately at home when Mr. Denham called; but when Mr. Valpine was

mentioned to him, he scarcely recollected the name; and as for poor Reybridge and his fortunes, they had entirely slipped his memory, amidst the confusion of business. "All I know of the matter, Sir," said he, "is, that this Mr. Valpine, with whom I was slightly acquainted at Shrewsbury, and who knew my *weight* at the India House, lodged a certain sum of money in my hands, for the purpose of procuring for the young man you mention, the privileges of a free-merchant, and supplying him with the *needful* for the voyage."—"And pray, Sir, if I may ask," replied the rector, "were there no other people employed in this transaction? Was the money remitted to you in bills, or drafts, or how?"—"Why, faith, now Sir," answered Horton, "I was supplied with the money from Mr. Settlebright, the banker, in Lombard-street, on a letter of credit given me by Mr. Valpine."—"Good heaven!" exclaimed the rector,

"what connexion could such a man as Valpine have had with Mr. Settlebright?"—"That's more than I can possibly tell, Sir," answered Horton, "I only know, that in consideration of certain arrangements between Mr. Valpine and me, in the course of which I had no reason to be dissatisfied with that gentleman's conduct, who really appeared to me to have the warmest interest in this Mr. Reybridge's fate, I not only bustled very much to procure him good accommodations on board the Phœnix, but also some letters of recommendation from two or three persons of consequence, and which, no doubt, have been of advantage to him."—"And, pray, good Sir," continued Mr. Denham, "is this a proper hour to meet with Mr. Settlebright at home?"—"When he is in town, Sir," answered Mr. Horton, "but at present he is in Yorkshire."—The rector, notwithstanding this communication, repaired to the

banking-house, in Lombard-street; but, to his additional mortification and astonishment, was informed by the clerks that they knew of no such person as Valpine, though they very well recollect Mr. Horton's receiving money, to a large amount, from Mr. Settlebright. With this unsatisfactory information, the old clergyman was obliged to return to Grosvenor-square, but not before he had taken the banker's directions in the country, to whom he determined to write, without loss of time.

On entering the breakfast-parlour, he found the earl and our hero alone. The former, with satisfaction on his countenance, the latter with unusual dejection. "My dear Mr. Denham," said his lordship, "Louisa has heard my son's apology with more complacency than my most sanguine hopes presaged; and, although she has given no positive consent to be his at the expiration of her minority, yet she has been good enough

to say, that much must depend upon the continuation of his present forbearance. I do not enquire where you have been, but have you breakfasted?"—"I have not, my lord," replied the rector, "but, if you please, will have some tea in my own room. Ralph, will you accompany me?"—Our hero arose, and moved towards the door. "Mr. Denham," observed the earl, "as I am still undetermined on some points relative to Valpine, the sooner I am favoured with my young friend's story, here, the better."—"I will return with him after I have breakfasted," replied the rector, "if your lordship will then be at leisure."—"I shall," rejoined the earl. As Ralph had expressed his determination of calling the moment he arrived in London upon Mr. Horton, his tutor now informed him of the ill success of his own visit to that gentleman, and his r. solution of writing forthwith to Mr. Settlebright, on the subject. "I am

more than ever convinced, my dear child," continued he, "that you have been the dupe of some deep laid scheme of villany. And yet I am confounded to think, that a man of Mr. Settlebright's character and connexions, could ever have been induced to connive at what he even suspected to be wrong! Valpine's name does not once appear in this gentleman's books, nor had any of his clerks ever heard of him before. Yet they remembered Mr. Horton's receiving large supplies of money from the house, and which supplies Horton confesses to have drawn on the strength of Mr. Valpine's letter of credit. I confess these contradictions amaze me more than I have power to express. However, so far as they relate to Mr. Settlebright, they cannot long remain unexplained, and we must leave the solution of all other mysterious points to Providence, my dear boy; for my part, I am determined to settle where I am:

to cling to this villain, this Valpine; to trace him to all his haunts, whatever labour it may cost me, but I will detect him."—Ralph was too much agitated to make any reply; he could only press his tutor's hand in token of the grateful emotions that swelled his heart; a kind of eloquence which the good old man was as well satisfied as acquainted with.

But there were other emotions in the poor youth's bosom, which seemed to forebode a state of wretchedness to which it was vain to expect that the whole extent of his philosophy could reconcile him.

Extravagant as the idea will appear to our readers, he had presumed to cherish a hope, that on the final rejection of lord Westmere, Louisa—the beautiful, the accomplished, the wealthy, and illustrious heiress of Leybrook, might possibly turn a favourable eye towards him. And, though he had not forgot-

ten the solemn promise she had made to her grandfather, not to unite herself with meanness or obscurity; yet his imagination had flattered him with an assurance that fate would no longer withhold from him the knowledge of his parents, and who, of course, were to be both noble and wealthy, when there should be no other obstacle to the accomplishment of his felicity. But an act of oblivion had now been passed on his rival's former conduct, and time only appeared to interpose between this happy rival and certain success. Hence arose the clouds of dejection on his brow, and which, not even the present interesting state of his affairs, could remove. That Mr. Denham read the fatal history of his heart, may very fairly be presumed, but the good old clergyman seemed unwilling to begin a subject on which he could neither receive nor impart pleasure.

CHAP. XI.

In which much is said, but little done.

REYBRIDGE, notwithstanding the obstacles he had to contend with, went through the whole of his history before the earl, with correctness and perspicuity. His lordship heard him to an end, with equal pleasure and surprise, then turning to Mr. Denham; "I do not wonder," said he, "that you feel affection for this young man; but this is no time to waste in words. By deeds only can I convince him of the value I place both in his confidence, and your own. No, my friend, I cannot doubt any longer of treachery, and that of the blackest kind, having been practised on our adventurer, but before I speak fur-

ther on the subject, I must question Valpine whilst the remarkable parts of his conduct towards our young friend are fresh in my memory. In the mean time, Ralph," continued he familiarly, and affectionately pressing our hero's hand, "keep up your spirits, and assure yourself that I must always respect and befriend virtue however clouded and depressed either by malice or misfortune."—Our hero was overcome by this generous treatment: he carried the hand of his noble patron respectfully to his lips, and bathed it with the genuine tears of gratitude and veneration. He would have spoken, but his old tutor saw the agitation of his spirits, and led him gently out of the room.

The earl immediately rang the bell and desired that Mr. Valpine might be called. The worthy gentleman instantly obeyed the summons, and stood with so much composure before his noble benefactor that a more scrupulous judge

than lord Ardendale might almost have been persuaded of his innocence. His lordship regarded him for some moments with a look of surprise not quite unmingled with resentment, and then began the following conversation.—"Mr. Valpine, when you shall understand that it is my intention to be the *future* friend of young Reybridge, I am induced to hope you will afford me that assistance towards discovering the secret of his birth, which I have strong reasons to believe will crown my exertions with success"—"My lord?"—"Without reverting to the incidents of the youth's life from the time of his unfortunate separation from his excellent tutor to his residence under your roof, and the subsequent trials of adversity he underwent, you will readily conceive that I have just grounds for my former opinion; and, therefore, unless you can clearly and satisfactorily explain the *motives* that, on several mo-

mentous occasions, regulated your conduct towards him, and which conduct appears to me to have been altogether unaccouutable; I must, like my reverend friend, Mr. Denham, suspect that you are the possessor, and perhaps the only *surviving* one, of some important information concerning him which you are interested in concealing."—"And pray, my lord, allow me to ask wherein my conduct has appeared so unaccountable? If your lordship alludes to my ill-judged liberality towards a young man, the proofs of whose idleness and ingratitude towards another, I was myself the innocent cause of detecting, it must be confessed I did not act with that prudence which I know has been ascribed to me; but why, my lord, think it so miraculous a thing that acts of benevolence should flow through other channels besides those of rank and power?—I beg your pardon, my lord, I see you are offended; but I must and

will be just to myself when I stand accused of practising deception, without a shadow of proof. However, my lord, I have received obligations from you which I gratefully acknowledge, and though your lordship's present suspicions are ungenerous, I will, in consideration of those obligations, endeavour to remove them."—"Proceed, Sir, if you please."—"Your friend, Mr. Denham, my lord, has in his possession a letter which I wrote to him soon after the death of Mrs. Reybridge. This letter gives a full and explicit account of that melancholy event, corroborated by the testimony of a man whom, I never, till that time, saw; who was your lordship's and Mr. Denham's confidential messenger, to Stoke-hill, and whose particular interest it would have been, even admitting that he was undeserving of this confidence, to have discovered any attempt at imposition. This man was the late Mr. Rushden—a gentleman

attached to your lordship by every tie of honour and gratitude, with a mind, superior, certainly, to his station, and of strict integrity, as I have often heard your lordship repeat, in the management of pecuniary trusts. Mr. Rushden, my lord, was in the room when the good lady breathed her last; and he, as well as myself and Mrs. Valpine, heard her dying words—the same which are contained in this letter to Mr. Denham, and which he, (Rushden) attested. Surely, my lord, after this you cannot for an instant suppose that I know more of this young man's parents than Rushden did? But it seems evident to me, and I am astonished that your lordship can doubt about the matter, that he is Mr. Mapleton's child." —"And by whom?" hastily interrupted the earl.—"Probably, my lord, by some favourite servant-maid. Mr. Mapleton was a good, a religious man; but Mrs. Mapleton had long been dead,

and we are not always faultless beings, my lord!"—"Did you know Mr. Mapleton, Sir?"—"No, my lord, he died before I came to reside at Stoke."—"Well, Mr. Valpine, I must confess that this circumstance of the letter attested by Rushden, and which I now recollect your having sent, is an argument I cannot parry; but you do not know, Sir, all the motives that make me so anxious to discover the parentage of Reybridge, and I must still think"—"If your lordship still suspects, any further attempt at justification will be useless. While Reybridge was with me at Shrewsbury, did I do otherwise than fulfil the charge of his dying benefactress? I did not, I confess, admonish him so often as I wished, against extravagance, I had difficulties of my own to struggle with, and to curb my poor wife's love of dissipation, which threatened our ruin, was the sole object at that time of my thoughts."—"And

yet, Mr. Valpine, on the verge of ruin yourself, you could afford nearly *two thousand pounds* to fit out young Reybridge for a foreign country; and though with your wife's extravagance the *sole object* of your thoughts, could negociate an eligible situation for him. And this was done out of pure love to a young man whose little fortune had been squandered under your roof, during one continued round of folly and dissipation, whom you had convicted of ingratitude towards the best of men, and whom you suffered to lie in gaol *a fortnight,* before you attempted to relieve, or even to see him! Wear not these facts, Mr. Valpine, the face of mystery? Can any reasonable being suppose, for one moment, that you were, during these occurrences, only planning schemes of beneficence, and from motives purely disinterested? But pray, Sir, allow me to ask you whence sprung the pecuniary resources that enabled you to support

so long your style of living at Shrewsbury, and to which Reybridge owes at once his ruin and his preservation? At the death of Mrs. Reybridge, Mr. Denham has convinced me beyond dispute, that you were deeply involved in debt, and that the fortune you received with the lady you soon after married could barely have enabled you to discharge what you owed! Whence then, I ask, arose this sudden wealth?"—"My lord, I am not prepared to reply to questions so abrupt."—"No, Sir; I see you are not;" replied the earl, "but, beware, Mr. Valpine; do not oblige me to use harsher methods to enforce the truth."—"What will you do, my lord?" answered Valpine with a sneer, "what can you prove? You may dismiss me from your house, 'tis true; but I will rather bid adieu to it and your lordship for ever, than submit to this inquisitorial tyranny. My lord, your suspicions are beneath you!"—The earl arose in evi-

dent disorder.—" Quit my house, Sir!" exclaimed he impetuously, " quit it this instant. I perceive you are a villain!"—" Farewell, my lord!" replied Valpine, " your menaces are vain, *they* cannot reach me. I owed you obligations, but your present conduct has cancelled them. Nor think, my lord, you cast me off to poverty. I have still *resources* which your lordship can never discover. Recollect, however, that you have branded me with the name of villain! Noble as you are, and shielded by power and affluence, you may still have cause to repent the insult."—So saying, he left the room, whilst a malignant smile seemed to speak the confidence of successful malice.

Our fair heroine, in the mean time, was the subject of a very obstinate contention between two very formidable opponents; viz. love and duty;—each striving, with equal perseverance, to drive the other from her heart. To

have been totally insensible to the personal, as well as mental qualifications of our hero, directed as her eye was to them through the medium of gratitude, would neither have been natural, nor would it, we may venture to surmise, have been expected by the majority of our readers. She had, indeed, continued her contemplations of this amiable youth till they had settled into that predilection in his favour which the strong ties of duty, on every side, warned her to abandon.

Love, on the other hand, under that most dangerous of all disguises, innocent friendship, was persuading her that she might indulge these favourable sentiments with impunity.

Reybridge, who in the calm moments of reflection, had been obliged to admit the absurdity of cherishing hopes that could never possibly be realized, now came to the resolution of relinquishing them altogether, and to withdraw himself, as far as consistently with common

politeness he could, from her fascinating society. For Ralph was conscious though Louisa was not, that love would too succesfully apply to his own purposes, the slightest advance of friendship. The old rector, in the mean time, wrote to Mr. Settlebright the banker, and the earl, who knew him to be a man of property and professional respectability, gave it as his opinion that the answer must at least explain the secret of Valpine's resources, information which would necessarily lead to discoveries of greater importance.

CHAP. XII.

Hope *still proved a deluder, and* Love *will have his way.—More conversations.—An interesting proposal made to our hero, and his manful resolutions in consequence.*

Mr. Denham, although he thought that Valpine's dismission had been rather premature, and that lord Ardendale had been more just than politic on the occasion, determined to wait for an answer to his letter to Mr. Settlebright, before he discovered his sentiments, and for which answer he was, now, in daily expectation.

When to a natural gloominess of disposition are joined spirits angry and vindictive, they can scarcely ever be disguised, even when disguise is necessary to the completion of projects the

most interesting. Hence it was that lord Westmere, though he knew that his future success with Miss Leybrook would depend upon a total reformation of life and manners, could not so far curb his temper and inclinations as to prevent her from observing the struggles it cost him. To have made Reybridge his friend, in compliance with his father's wishes, to have shown a generous, and indeed a natural interest in the misfortunes of a youth apparently not older than himself, would have favoured his cause with Louisa, infinitely more than the cautious attentions he was, now, constantly paying her; but this was a sacrifice so violent to his real disposition, that he could not bring himself to make it, and the earl, and Mr. Denham were equally grieved and alarmed at this malicious ascendency in his mind.

In other respects, however, the young lord continued closely on his guard. His dissipations were forsaken. He

devoted his leisure hours to rational pursuits, and his conduct towards his fair mistress was delicate and respectful. In short, could he have yielded with a better grace to the dismission of his favourite Valpine, and have espoused the cause of justice against an ill-grounded partiality, there might have been hopes for him even at an earlier period than the one stipulated for.

In the mean time the long expected answer from Mr. Settlebright arrived, couched in the following terms:

"TO THE REV. CHARLES DENHAM.

"Sir,

"I am duly favoured with yours of the 5th instant, on the subject whereof, I cannot well commit many observations to paper. Thus far, however, I can safely say that I am entirely ignorant of any deception that may have been put in practice by the gentleman Mr.

Valpine, to whom you allude. I had orders, *which it was neither my interest nor duty to disobey*, to supply Mr. Horton with cash from fifteen hundred to two thousand pounds, upon a general order signed by Mr. Valpine. Further I cannot, at present, explain, but on my return to London, in a few days, I shall perhaps be duly authorized to mention the name of the person from whom these orders were received ; in the mean time

I remain,

Sir,

with all respect

your humble servant,

"AARON SETTLEBRIGHT."

Wakefield,

October 23d, 17—.

Had there been any doubt before of villany, the above letter would have sufficiently removed it ; although the banker, it was evident, from the style

of his letter, was not a partner therein. The earl had no sooner perused it, than he lamented the precipitancy of his indignation, which had obliged him to dismiss Valpine so abruptly. Mr. Denham, however, observed, that as the principal would now be brought to light, is was not of much consequence. But the good rector's expectations were again nipped in the bud. Mr. Settlebright was seized with a malignant fever the day he wrote his satisfactory letter, and died after a severe illness of eight and forty hours.

Thus was the hand of Providence still suspended over the dark veil that concealed the fortunes of our hero, but it was not withdrawn,—and though Valpine, flown nobody knew whither, and Mr. Settlebright dead, all hope of discovery seemed to be at an end, yet was this discovery in a state of dreadful preparation to burst with awful and unexpected thunder on the heads of the

guilty! Severe was the disappointment experienced by the good old rector from this unfortunate catastrophe. Lord Ardendale felt scarcely less concerned, and poor Ralph was driven by it, almost to distraction. There *was*, then, some secret and superior mover that regulated his destiny; but who? Could it be a parent? Major Penrose's suggestion never struck with greater force upon his mind: and even the earl and Mr. Denham again recurred to it. The only thing, now, to be done, was to try Valpine once more; but Valpine was not to be found,—and after three or four day's search after him, the matter was, for the present, dropped. "We must," said Mr. Denham to Ralph, "leave it, now my child entirely to *Him* who can alone, and will, doubt it not, when least we think of it, bring all to light. Let us not repine at a delay which may be necessary to complete the great end of justice, but rest satisfied that our

own weak exertions have not been wanting to bring it about."

In the mean time that fatal passion, which, in spite of his utmost endeavours our hero could not subdue, had begun to sap the foundation of his health. It was in vain for him to fly from the occasional conversations of Louisa; to turn from her fascinating smiles, and those sweet and encouraging attentions, which, though meant and erroneously supposed by her to proceed from friendship only, were the pure tributes of a far tenderer regard. He yielded, therefore, to the infatuation, and as he began to cherish the gloomy presages of approaching decay, endeavoured to satisfy his conscience, that he might, for the short time he lived, indulge freely in the sweet converse of her he loved, without injuring the cause of honour. Little, however, did he suspect the real state of his mistress's heart. Louisa, indeed, did not suspect it her-

self, but the time was approaching when fate had determined to reveal it to him by an accident which no human foresight could have prevented. How this accident was brought about, and what were the consequences, time will show.

One day, after a long private conversation with the earl, Mr. Denham summoned Ralph to his room, and thus addressed him: "My dear boy, as our enquiries after Valpine have proved fruitless, and as, without his assistance, your parentage must still remain a secret, though your inhuman relative, whether male or female, may be now living in the next street, it will be necessary for me to return to my parishioners. In conversing with lord Arden̈dale on the subject this morning, he suddenly demanded what were my purposes in regard to you, and how I meant to establish you in life? I told him that my design was, if you approved of it yourself, to qualify you for holy or-

ders. "I am convinced," said I, "my lord, that his morals are pure, and the suavity of his disposition, and serious turn of his mind will make the awful and exalted duty of a minister of the gospel more pleasant to him, than a dry and laborious application necessary for physic or the law."—"I am happy," replied the generous earl, "that such is your determination, and hope the plan I have to propose will be neither disagreeable to yourself nor our young friend. The present incumbent of the living of R——, which is in my gift, is now in so dangerous a state of health, that his great age makes it almost impossible he should recover, or, that admitting his recovery, he should long survive the effects of his late attack. As he is a man of great piety and worth, and will leave behind him two amiable young women, his grand-daughters, unprovided for; I should not wish the advantages of the benefice to be taken

from them. My plan is, therefore, to make Ralph a presentation of the living, provided he should fancy or select for a *wife*, the eldest girl, for whose virtuous and amiable character I will be answerable.—"Good God! Sir," exclaimed our hero, "What do you say?"—"You do not, then," continued the rector, casting a look of melancholy gravity upon his pupil, "approve of this scheme?" —"Oh! my friend;" replied Reybridge, recollecting himself, and grasping his tutor's hand, "I do, I do approve! How can I refuse to acquiesce in any scheme which you have sanctioned? Could I bear to reflect that I had ever rejected, in the moments of blind infatuation, so benevolent, so noble an offer?"—"Alas!" replied the good old man with a sigh, "I see, too late I see the error I have committed, my poor boy, in bringing you here. The infant passion which I discovered at P——n, has now, through my negligence and

inattention, grown into a flame, and nothing remains but to hasten from further danger. You must leave London privately. I will explain to lord Ardendale, as well as I can, the reason that I have compelled you so abruptly to depart. The subject of the living shall at present be laid aside, and though I am well aware that in your present frame of mind you believe it impossible you should ever love any other woman than Louisa Leybrook; yet, remember, dear Ralph, that virtue, to him who knows how to estimate her, is, in all forms attractive, and though she may originally have attached the heart in the more glowing and more fascinating ornament of beauty, she loses nothing of her intrinsic worth when more humbly clad; and will be still your security for happiness in the state of wedlock. The diamond, that but faintly gleams in the mine, cannot be preferred to the brilliant that sparkles in the crown, but the real

value is the same."—"No, Sir," exclaimed our hero, "this shall not be; kind and considerate as you are, mildly as you have ever passed over my many follies, I cannot consent to involve you in this, the worst of all. The earl must not know my weakness, and doubt not, my revered friend, but I will conquer it. But you must assist my endeavours, dear Sir, by employing me in some business that may divert my mind from dangerous contemplations; in the mean time I will try to reconcile it to the necessity of embracing the noble offer of lord Ardendale."—"That was spoken like my pupil!" replied the rector, tenderly embracing him, "yes, my dear boy; I will find you an employment that shall allow you no opportunity of indulging painful remembrances, and your patron shall remain ignorant of your passion. His lordship is not anxious for your decision in regard to his proposal, but I think, for your own

sake, you had better make up your mind soon. A fortnight, I think, will enable you."—"Yes, Sir;" replied Ralph with a sigh that smote the old rector to the heart, "I hope in that time I shall have reconciled myself to the arrangement."—"Well, then," replied Mr. Denham, "I shall stay another fortnight with the earl."

The employment marked out by the rector for Ralph, was a course of classical and devotional exercises, preparatory to his taking the necessary degrees at the university; the earl, in the mean time, was rather surprised that Mr. Denham did not inform him of the result of the proposal which he concluded had been made, but as the subject was of a delicate nature, the resumption of it, on his part, was out of the question.

Poignant, however, as were the sufferings of Reybridge when he reflected on the terrible sacrifice he was about to make to honour and gratitude, those of

the fair Louisa were scarcely less to be deplored. The grateful and affectionate esteem, which, from the first hour of her acquaintance with our hero, had been gradually expanding in her bosom, had now ripened into love, and she was too late in perceiving the danger into which her imprudence had led her. Great, therefore, were the struggles between honour and passion. Her heart, sometimes a specious reasoner, would tell her that as no actual promise had been made to lord Westmere, she could not be obliged to give him a preference, and that the one given to her grandfather, under the impression of her fears for his life, ought not to interfere with her real happiness. The cooler monitor, conscience, however, dictated another decision, and for the present c[illegible] off victorious.

Lord Westmere's conduct, i[illegible] time, continued to improv[illegible] the eyes of his father [illegible]

ham's. He entered but sparingly into the amusements of the town, and then always with his father and Louisa, to whom his attentions were tender, but respectful. Some hours of the day he devoted to study, and always mingled in the conversation of the table in such a manner as made it apparent it was rather with a view to receive, than to give information. To our hero he was still distant, but no longer unfriendly; on the contrary, he would frequently demand of the earl, the rector, and even Miss Leybrook, whether Mr. Reybridge could not be established in some respectable profession.

But the strongest of all proofs in Louisa's mind, that her destined lord had really begun to reform his manners ... temper, was, that he had never, in ... instance, betrayed a jealousy of ... ugh she was conscious she ... nguarded moments, given ... This unexpected con-

duct, evincing so great a confidence in her honour, at once pleased and surprised her, and it was no small consolation to her heart, when she reflected that she might shortly become his wife.

Yet there were moments when a less partial observer might have seen gloom and inquietude on the young lord's brow; and that the rule of life, and cast of character he was supporting, were but assumed. Louisa was, perhaps, the only person who remarked these occasional abstractions of mind, but she attributed them to the state of uncertainty in which he was still living in regard to her—an uncertainty which she sometimes thought it would be better to remove at once by a voluntary offer of her hand, than to suffer an increasing predilection in favour of our hero to render a contrary decision absolutely necessary. Reybridge, in the mean time, was suddenly missed by lord Ardendale from the evening conversations, and